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Stanley Kauffmann: 'The French Lieutenant's Woman'

Michael Walzer: The Morality of Hiroshima • *William Gass: Argentine Obsession*

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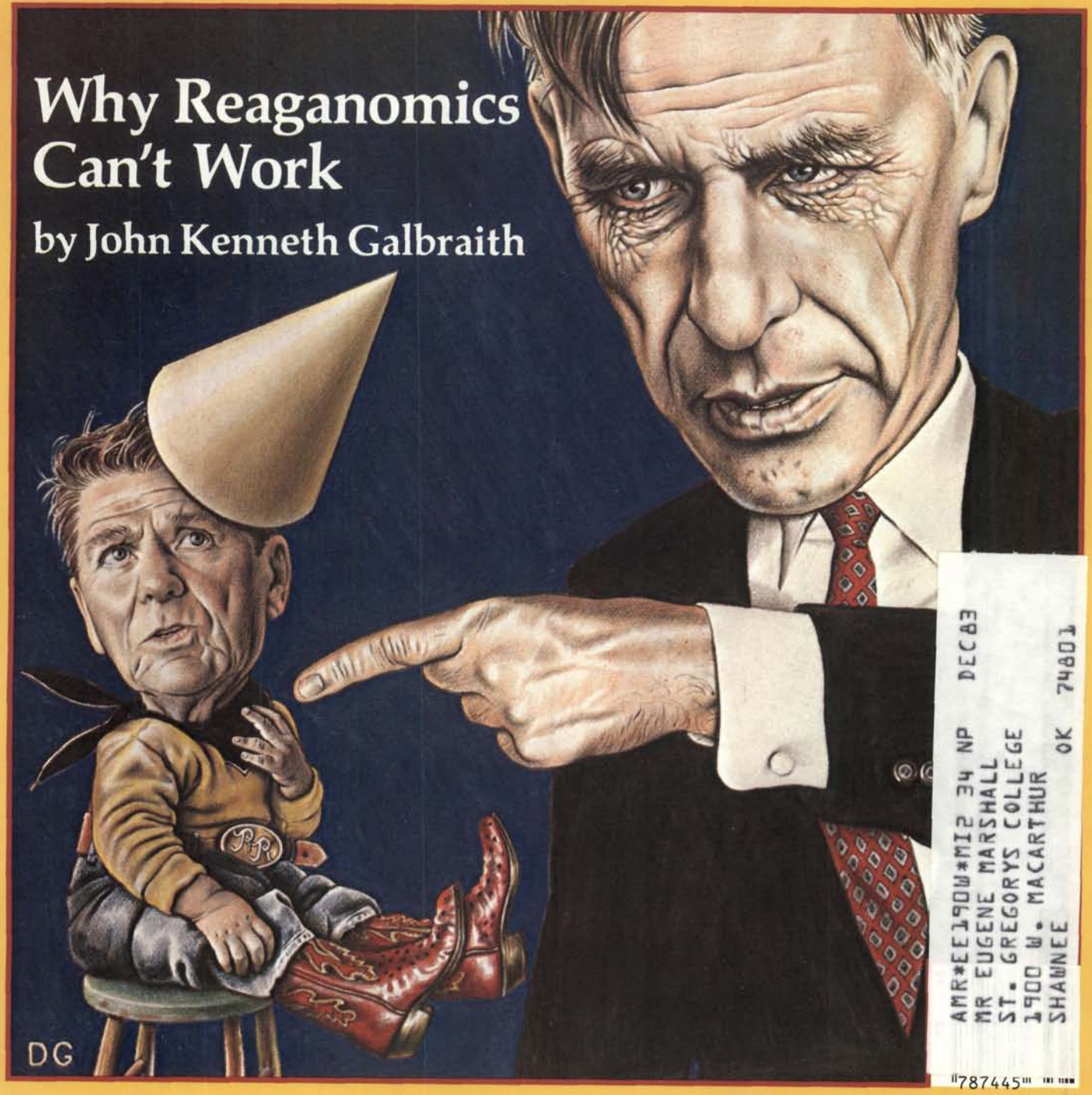

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CORRESPONDENCE

THE MARKET-GOD

To the editors:

The August 15 editorial entitled "The New Gilded Age" was certainly to the point. The "Reagan reaction" is precisely the phrase best suited for placing this supply-side trickle-down heartlessness (premised as it is upon greed and materialism) in a historical context. Similar to another materialist philosophy, it tolerates the discarding of millions of people into the trash bin of history in order to invest in the future. This supply-side roll of the dice is but another variant of what Karl Polanyi (in his classic study of industrialization, *The Great Transformation*) called "a mystical readiness to accept the social consequences of economic improvement, whatever they might be." Yet, with the Reagan reaction, we cannot even predict economic improvement! All one can say with confidence is that short-run suffering will occur. Put in Professor Polanyi's terms: "If the immediate effect of a change is deleterious, then, until proof to the contrary, the final effect is deleterious." President Reagan seems all too willing to sacrifice the hopes and lives of Americans. In this specific instance the objective is the propitiation of his market-god.

Walter C. Uhler
Bensalem, Pennsylvania

ATOMIC INNOCENCE

To the editors:

I was saddened by M.P.'s emotional attack (Washington Diarist, *TNR*, July 25) on the organization of which I am president. Neither our June 29 board statement, nor the Arms Control Association sponsored report, "Iraq, Israel, and the Middle East Proliferation Problem," by Charles Van Doren, former assistant director for nonproliferation at the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, argued "the case for Iraq's atomic innocence." Indeed, both documents, and my concluding remarks on them at our June 29 press conference, made clear that Iraq was acquiring worrisome capabilities.

The ACA Board did state that the Israeli raid subverted multilateral institutions and complicated diplomatic efforts aimed at containing proliferation. We stand by that statement. We continue to believe that strengthened international safeguards, coupled with assertive diplomacy, offer a much better hope for dealing with the security concerns of all the nations of the Middle East, than does nuclear anarchy. The precedent of a preemptive strike against potentially threatening nuclear facilities is as dangerous to Israel as it is to its neighbors. Existing safeguards are not perfect, and we do not claim that they are. They should be strengthened. But actions such as Israel's will only weaken them, invite retaliation, and in the end, prove self-defeating.

Herbert Scoville Jr., president
Arms Control Association
Washington, DC

M. P. replies:

Mr. Scoville is one of those weapons intellectuals who seem always to downplay the aggressive capabilities and designs of adversaries of the US and its friends. At the same time, in his eyes, the US and its friends are always courting doomsday. There is, for example, hardly a new weapon proposed for the American arsenal Scoville can bring himself to approve. But the truth is that his organization went to great lengths to acquit the Iraqis of the nuclear ambition. Despite massive evidence to the contrary, the ACA's paper said that Iraqi work on a future bomb was only "a theoretical risk." And why, then, according to Scoville, did Iraq acquire 95 percent enriched uranium, good enough to make Hiroshima-type bombs? "Iraq probably preferred to rely on its own capabilities for production of such items as medical isotopes." If Scoville believes that, he'll believe anything. Among the things he does believe is that the European supply of nuclear materials to Iraq shouldn't even have contributed to Israel's sense of insecurity.

WESTSPEAK

To the editors:

Margo Howard's contribution to the Diarist (*TNR*, August 22 & 29) inspires me to suggest another neologism for the English language (with humble gratitude to R. D. Rosen). California-babble: a derogatory term to describe simplistic ways of perceiving and expressing oneself geographically, the manipulative medium of short-order Californiana and pre-packaged enlightenment. Don't easterners ever tire of exchanging clichés about life on the West Coast?

Katherine Roper
Oakland, California

CALCULATING HUMAN WORTH

To the editors:

Your editorial "The Clean Air Wheeze" (*TNR*, August 22 & 29) contains serious inaccuracies which must be corrected. First, the Business Roundtable has never recommended cost-benefit analysis for use in the health-based ambient air quality standard-setting process. Second, no one, to the best of our knowledge, has ever recommended $550 as the value of a human life in any benefit analysis.

In a study entitled "Cost-Effectiveness and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Air Quality Regulation," done for us by National Economic Research Associates, there is a reference to a study by Rosen and Thaler (Columbia University Press, 1976) that suggested $550 as the amount people were willing to pay to avoid a one in 1,000 chance of mortality. There is no sensible way that this can be construed as an estimate of the value of a life.

Van E. Langley
The Business Roundtable
Washington, DC

TRANSFER, PLEASE

To the editors:

The controversy over the MX missile could be simply resolved by placing the MX on the MBTA, the Boston subway system (where Charlie is still lost), and publishing the schedules in *Pravda*. Neither side would know where the MX was at any given time. The use of the MBTA as a shell game would be perfect and save a lot of money and land.

Bernard Fang
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The editors welcome correspondence from *TNR*'s readers. Letters intended for publication should include the correspondent's full name, address, and telephone number; should be typed double-spaced; and should be held to under 200 words.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

White House Booby Traps

My guess is that Congress won't vote the cuts in revenue and the increases in taxes necessary to get President Reagan's 1984 budget balanced. The proposals now being sent to Capitol Hill would require such sacrifice by people of lower and middle incomes that I don't think Congress will support them, unless there is an international crisis. There may indeed be some such crisis. The language between Washington and Moscow gets rougher and rougher, and the restraints that hold back an all-out arms race wear thin. Now the State Department charges Moscow with failing to fulfill the Helsinki agreements to give prior notification of major military movements: namely, the deployment of some 100,000 troops in maneuvers near Poland. Russia is held responsible for the incursion of Afghani troops into Pakistan. It is hard to guess where this will end as the US strains to increase its military buildup at the same time that the stock market plunges, out of fear of an uncontrolled budget. Much hangs on the September 23 meeting of Secretary Haig and Soviet foreign minister Gromyko in New York, their first direct encounter.

There are crises everywhere and an embitterment of spirit. The honeymoon is over. On September 19 trade unions and a couple of hundred activist groups hold a mass Solidarity Day rally here to vent their anger. The remarkable thing is that the change in mood comes so soon after Reagan's triumphs in Congress over the budget and tax programs. Students have watched Reagan carefully to see if he could break the political cycle that first elects a president and then destroys him. It has been noted by political scientists for years. Some call it the fatal flaw in the presidential system. In *The Deadlock of Democracy*, published in 1963, James MacGregor Burns argues that the separation of powers brings stalemate and deadlock. Godfrey Hodgson says, in *All Things to All Men*, in 1980: "Never has any one office had so much power as the President of the US possesses. Never has so powerful a leader been so impotent. . . ." And James L. Sundquist, among others, writes in a Brookings Institution study, *Politics and Policy*: "The US is unique among the world's democracies in the extent to which the institutional system is weighted on the side of restraint regardless of the immediate mandate of the people."

Well, we shall see. It is great drama. We know the cycle: the political convention nominates somebody for president and immediately the press transforms him into a Superman. He is touched with the mystic aura of the White House. The public feels the magic. Maybe this time the spell will work! So Nixon takes the place of Lyndon Johnson, Carter replaces Nixon-Ford, Reagan ousts Carter. Everything will be fine again, the voters say each time.

However, a little cynicism is breaking in. In recent years, progressively fewer have bothered to vote. Last year nonvoters reached 48 percent, and of those who voted only 27 percent voted for Reagan. Did that give him a "mandate"? The president and his supporters insist in every speech that it did, but it is difficult to pin it down. He did score a remarkable victory in getting his economic package through Congress. He left for vacation in triumph. The curious thing now is that conditions suddenly have changed: it seems less likely that taxes can be cut, arms boosted, and the deficit reduced all at the same time.

All the economic information I get comes from the Mobil ads in the newspapers, the great new instrument of corporate advocacy advertising. Mobil admonished on June 1, "Let Congress heed the people." It said that the president received "an overwhelming mandate" and it urged readers to "write your congressman" right away. A few days later Mobil was even more vigorous. It said the president proposed cuts in the federal budget of $48.6 billion and it calculated that if Congress didn't approve this, it would cost the taxpayers "well over $5 million an hour." Some critics, it noted, charged that the program "harms the poor," but it answered this tartly, if a little vaguely, by asking: "And how about recent charges that college dropouts in New York City may have received several million dollars in federal and state aid intended for serious students?" I couldn't quite follow the thrust of this argument but it seemed to be that there is waste and corruption everywhere.

Naturally I wrote to my congressman right away. You don't get orders like that often. And there was the Mobil assurance that the Reagan package "will restore economic vigor by returning more of the economy to the people." What I can't understand is the subsequent behavior of the stock market. Congress did what Mobil and the corporate world instructed. For a while the Dow Jones Industrial Average responded and stocks leaped in March to 1,015, an eight-year high. But then the market collapsed. As I write this the Dow Jones average has lost 150 points, 15 percent of its value in paper values, billions of dollars. Everytime I turn to my typewriter to support the corporate world it seems that Wall Street has some more jitters.

Recent sympathetic writers have asked if Reagan hasn't thrown off the hex of the Washington stalemate. Hedley Donovan in the September 21 issue of *Fortune* magazine reviews the once "fashionable" theories and says that they now "sound a little dated." Columnists Evans and Novak in their rush-job *The Reagan Revolution* (Dutton), covering the first four months of the presidency, take the same position. They agree that "starting with Harry Truman the seven postwar presidents . . . encountered greater political misfortune than any group of presidents in history. . . ." Only Eisenhower escaped. There is no reason to gloat at this presidential ordeal. He is the man who makes our system run, if anyone does. I see gathering dissension now over the Reagan program. Some part of it is the program itself. But beyond that there is the system itself, fragmented parties, built-in booby traps. Can it work?

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 23, 1981

SUPPLY-SIDE FOLLIES, CHAPTER TWO

The story thus far: when we left Our Heroes, those spunky young supply siders and their avuncular paladin, they had routed their enemies left and right. Only three years after banding together to challenge the economic establishment, they had seen their magic cure-all passed into law: a large cut in marginal tax rates, skewed toward the better-off. To liberals concerned about social equity, they said that only a revitalized private economy can help the poor. To traditional conservatives concerned about government deficits, they insisted that most of the cost (or even all of it) would be made up by new tax revenues from an expanding economy. It was mid-summer 1981, and the sun was shining bright. *Now, the saga continues.*

The first cool winds of autumn blew an ominous cloud into the supply-side sky, in the form of continuing high interest rates. These threatened to stifle the economic boom that the supply siders had promised. The supply siders looked around, and discovered a new enemy in their midst: the monetarists. This dread sect, employing the doctrines of the tiny but dangerous Milton Friedman, had taken over the Federal Reserve Board and had made inroads into the Reagan Treasury Department itself. The monetarists seemed determined to keep the squeeze on money and credit in order to eliminate inflation, whatever the cost to the economy and to the supply-side nostrums. (See "The Market and Mr. Reagan" by John Kenneth Galbraith, page 15.)

The supply siders faced a dilemma. Their basic doctrine, truth to tell, does not even offer a theoretical solution for inflation. Every percentage point of real growth in national output, it is said, replaces a point of inflation. But inflation is about ten percent, and not even the most wild-eyed supply sider believes that the US economy can sustain real growth of half that amount. Real growth cannot catch up with the dollar expansion of the economy; to cure inflation, the dollar growth must be slowed to match real growth. Furthermore, inflation itself is probably the biggest roadblock to increased real growth. Among other problems, inflationary expectations and monetarist attempts to squelch them both lead to high interest rates, which discourage investment.

So the supply siders needed their own inflation cure, and now they have one: gold. Stage two of the supply-side agenda is a campaign to put the United States back on the gold standard, which was abandoned in stages between 1914 and 1971. An official Gold Commission, created at the behest of Senator Jesse Helms and Representative Ron Paul, is due to report its findings next month. Meanwhile, supply-side publicists such as Jude Wanniski, Tom Bethell, and Lewis Lehrman have been beating the drum for what Keynes, and decades of conventional wisdom, dismissed as a "barbarous relic."

Under a gold standard, the government fixes the dollar price of gold and makes a standing offer to buy or sell it at that price—presumably indefinitely. If people are queuing up to exchange dollars for gold, that means there are too many dollars and the government must reduce the supply. If people are queuing up to trade gold for dollars, that means it's time to print more. Since the supply of gold is relatively stable, the gold standard is supposed to guarantee a stable currency relative to all goods and services in the economy.

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The supply siders claim to abominate monetarism because it attempts to cure inflation by purposely slowing the economy. Supply siders know only growth. But the gold standard *is* monetarism, using a different monetary measure. Like any attempt to reduce inflation solely by manipulating the money supply, it does nothing to change the underlying forces that increase the *demand* for money, or to change the trade-off between recession and inflation. Therefore, it can only slow inflation by inducing recession—undoing all the supply siders' best laid plans.

There are only two problems with monetarism: it may not work, and—worse—it may work. Gold-standard monetarism would probably reduce the first danger and increase the second. Since November 1979, the Federal Reserve Board under Chairman Paul Volcker has been trying to control the money supply. But it turns out to be harder than people thought. The financial industry keeps inventing new ways to transact business that don't fit into various standard definitions of "the" money supply, and that can't be controlled easily by the Fed. The Fed's mediocre performance, combined with the widespread belief that it will ease its control under political pressure if things get too tough, have created inflationary expectations that prevent even record-high interest rates from having the desired effect. The gold bugs argue that a gold standard solves the problem of defining money, and disciplines the government in a way people will really believe, thus piercing inflationary expectations and lowering interest rates. Maybe so. But there are reasons for doubt. The price of gold may or may not be an adequate surrogate for the general price level; there is a danger of uncontrollable international flows, and even of manipulation by the two biggest gold suppliers, the Soviet Union and South Africa. And popular skepticism about the government's resolve would not disappear, either. As the *New York Times* wrote recently, Congress voting for a gold standard would be like a dieter putting a lock on the refrigerator, but retaining the key. The deed can always be undone.

And there soon would be strong pressure indeed to undo it. All the antiseptic talk about people queuing up at the gold window and the dollar window makes the gold standard sound like some sort of game. In practice, in order to avoid a rush on guaranteed-price gold, the government will have to do the very same things it is doing now in its attempts to control "money" in its myriad paper, metal, and electronic forms. That is, it will raise interest rates, increase bank reserve requirements, and so on. When the huge deficit the supply-siders are so nonchalant about materializes, the government—forbidden to "monetize" it by creating more money—will go to the credit markets, "crowding out" productive investment and driving up interest rates. The size of the economy in dollar terms would stabilize, but most of the reduction at first would be in real production, not in inflation.

Some conservatives are honest in their belief that a recession is precisely what we need to purge inflation before restoring the economy to healthy growth. But the supply siders have tried to have it both ways, sneering at any talk of economic slowdown while pooh-poohing the danger of deficits and inflation. There *are* ways of reducing inflation that aren't recessionary. But these would involve the kind of specific analysis of different industries that supply siders abjure, and a level of government involvement that they find distasteful. They prefer the dazzling simplicity and the delightful antiquarian perverseness of the gold standard. Stylistically, supply-side chapter two makes a perfect sequel to supply-side chapter one, the tax cut. As a matter of economic logic, they are perfectly contradictory.

The Baldwin Century

Roger N. Baldwin died recently at the age of 97. He was the central figure in the defense and propagation of civil liberties for almost the whole of the 20th century. Civil liberties, as a constitutional principle and as a body of statutes, has never lacked supporters. Roger Baldwin's special contribution was the transformation of these easy loyalties into realistic, practical, specific actions. He institutionalized citizen action as the strongest bulwark of the Bill of Rights. The American Civil Liberties Union, which he founded in 1920, was his base of operations, his mighty fortress; now it is also his monument, self-constructed and indestructible, built upon what he saw as the natural right of every person to think, speak, write, and organize in freedom.

Baldwin's penchant for action put him in a unique category among civil libertarians. His effect was direct and lasting. He had a special fondness for heretics of the left and for the oppressed, but his commitment to civil liberties was absolute and universal. His other beliefs did not fit so clear a pattern, which made him all the more effective as the single-minded champion of free expression for all beliefs regardless of his own sympathies. Thus the liberal community cannot claim him exclusively. All Americans are in his debt whether they know it or not—perhaps especially those who do not.

In 1950, at the age of 65, Baldwin stepped down as operating head of the American Civil Liberties Union, but he never retired. He spent the next 30-odd years working just as indefatigably for human rights throughout the world. He did not hesitate to respond to Douglas MacArthur's invitation to institutionalize civil liberties in occupied Japan. Nor did his vigorous support for Indian independence and for Nehru's democratic

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India give him the slightest hesitation in condemning the autocratic excesses of Nehru's daughter. In civil liberties his taste was catholic, his energy limitless.

Baldwin did not just survive until he was 97; he lived every minute of those years. He never flagged in his commitment to, in his words, "the goal of a society with a minimum of compulsion, a maximum of individual freedom and of voluntary association, and the abolition of exploitation and poverty"—as good a summary of the liberal and democratic creed, by the way, as anyone has ever offered. In his 90s, having spent several lifetimes in thousands of tedious committee meetings, Roger Baldwin was still capable of reacting to injustice with a stubborn zeal that amazed and shamed fashionably lethargic listeners half his age. His final legacy to those he leaves behind may be his demonstration that a vibrant longevity is dependent upon a vibrant commitment.

Sour Note

Survivors of the "bidding war" between Democrats and Republicans are crawling out of their foxholes to find that the president paid for his economic package with a few well-placed contributions to the leading charities on Capitol Hill: those "mom and pop" oil companies that Senator Robert Dole worries about; trucking firms with deregulation pains; savings and loan companies. These are among the aboveboard "sweeteners," right there in the tax bill for all to see. But some of the worst and most cynical deals have never been reduced to print. Especially in agricultural programs, conservative southern Democrats—the "boll weevils"—wheedled plenty of cloakroom concessions from the White House in return for defecting to the Republican economic party line.

The sourest such sweetener involves, well, sweeteners. Reagan has withdrawn his opposition to a sugar price support, one of the least sensible plans ever to call for draining billions of dollars from consumers to an inefficient industry. A sugar price support is, in effect, a price floor. And like any good price floor, it tends to be substantially higher than the market price.

Congress did away with price floors for sugar, after 40 years of them, back in 1974. Since then, except for a few stopgap programs in 1977 and 1978, the sugar industry has been on its own, and hating every minute of it. Sugar remains probably the single most regulated commodity on the international market, and it varies wildly in price. It has sold for everything from nine cents to 41 cents per pound in the past two years.

Domestic industry apologists reason that a price support (in which the government takes complicated steps to keep the domestic market price above some fixed floor) is just the thing to stop fluctuations like that, and they assert that the consequent market "stability" will be good for everyone. Well, if by stability they mean that prices would fluctuate over a narrower range, they have a point. But what sugar interests omit is that the newly narrowed range is to include all the old highs and none of the lows.

Agriculture Secretary John Block had been arguing this point strongly and well before Congress. His department even leaked an "internal" study projecting increased consumer costs of four to five billion dollars—if the sugar plan goes through as it stands in committee proposals. Then the president all of a sudden switched sides, and the Agriculture Department, red-faced, withdrew its study from circulation. But it still holds. If the White House backs a compromise sugar plan, as is now reported, consumer costs would remain in the billions of dollars.

Even if it were true that the domestic sugar industry faced imminent collapse (which we doubt) and it were imperative that we save it (we're not sure of that either), the sugar plan as proposed is the worst possible way to do so. The best support plan is the one President Carter used in 1977, and the one for which the president retains permanent authority. Carter gave sugar a subsidy, pure and simple. The plan dreamed up by the House and Senate Agriculture committees calls for "non-recourse" loans, which work like this: the government floats low-interest loans to sugar processors, with the sugar as collateral; and if the processors don't like the market price of sugar when the loans come due, they just default—without paying interest—and the government gets to keep the sugar. That means processors never sell sugar for less than the "loan rate." And it means that they get to take advantage of low-interest loans no matter what the market price. It also means, in contrast to the direct subsidy, that *all sweeteners* (the market is split, in roughly equal parts, among domestic sugar, foreign sugar, and sugar substitutes) tend to stay above the price floor. Put that in your coffee and stir it.

Sitting On Defense

Every politician in America who feels the slightest twinge of presidential ambition should take the following oath for his own sake and the country's: "No matter how great the temptation, I will never ever be a demagogue on the defense issue." To ensure that the politicians live up to this oath, captains of the media, party leaders, and ordinary citizens should adopt their own rule of thumb: any politician who seeks the highest office by promising huge increases or huge cuts in defense spending either does not know what he is

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talking about or is lying, and in either event does not deserve to be president.

The electorate has been burned all too often by politicians who got elected promising one defense policy, only to deliver another. The worst examples were Woodrow Wilson and Lyndon Johnson, who pledged to keep us out of war and promptly got us in, but other candidates, too, have misused the issue either out of ignorance or mischief. John F. Kennedy blamed President Eisenhower for allowing a "missile gap" to develop between us and the Soviets, only to discover after his election that the gap was actually in our favor. Richard Nixon campaigned in 1968 promising a return to "clear-cut military superiority" over the Soviets and criticizing the Democrats for settling for less, only to invent the concepts of detente and "sufficiency." Nixon got reelected claiming he had launched a "generation of peace" though he now says that World War III is under way and we are losing. Some demagogues never quit.

Out of ignorance, rather than insincerity, Jimmy Carter claimed in 1976 that the US defense budget could be cut by five to seven percent. Carter had barely taken his oath of office before he realized that the promise couldn't be kept in light of the steady Soviet military buildup during the 1960s and 1970s. Carter should have disclosed his error immediately and forthrightly, but instead juggled numbers (by using the outgoing Ford administration's proposed budget increases as a base) to keep Democrats believing that Pentagon spending was going down. By the 1980 campaign, of course, the politics of defense had changed—increases, not decreases were popular—and Carter was claiming (correctly) that his administration had reversed the long-term decline in defense spending and had instituted a prudent five-year plan for upgrading US forces. Owing to his earlier record and his decisions not to build the B-1 bomber and deploy the neutron bomb, the electorate failed to appreciate what Carter had done for US defense.

WITH Ronald Reagan, of course, we returned to the more familiar form of defense demagoguery. Reagan had made a career of charging that the US was dangerously weak and that his opponents were soft on defense. He nearly denied Gerald Ford the 1976 Republican nomination by attacking his SALT and Panama Canal talks. During the Carter years, Reaganite superhawks kept the heat on. They succeeded in convincing much of Congress and the country that US nuclear missiles were vulnerable to a Soviet first strike and that this dire situation could be corrected only if SALT were scrapped and a huge new US missile-building program initiated. In a vain attempt to save his SALT treaty, Carter proposed to deploy 200 MX missiles, each with three warheads, along a complex system of roadways in Nevada and Utah, shuttling them among 4,600 shelters so that the Soviet Union would not know where to hit them. Poor Carter lost both SALT and the election under withering fire from Republicans who claimed that he had let the Russians achieve superiority in virtually every field of weaponry.

No doubt believing every word scribbled on his campaign cue cards, Reagan pledged to spend all the money necessary to restore the US "margin of safety," close the window of strategic vulnerability, re-arm America, and make the country great again—and also repair the US economy by cutting taxes and balancing the budget. Unfortunately, it appears that independent presidential candidate John B. Anderson and various Democrats were right when they said all that couldn't be done at the same time. Now Reagan is being forced to choose between Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and his proposed $1.6 trillion in Pentagon spending over the next five years, and Budget Director David Stockman's proposals for slower growth in defense spending (plus more drastic domestic spending cuts) and lower budget deficits.

All this might make merely for an agonizing decision process for the president and a messy struggle for power among his aides were it not for all the rhetoric that has gone before. Reagan has said—and Weinberger keeps saying—that America can't be strong unless it spends these vast sums on defense. He has set himself up—and the country, too—for being thought weak and irresolute if he sides with Stockman and spends less than Weinberger proposes.

THERE is an honorable way out. It is to side with Stockman and to confess that Carter's proposed $1.3 trillion in defense funding over the next five years was adequate after all. Reagan does not have to spend the money in the same way that Carter proposed. He does not have to build Carter's $70-billion MX system, for example, which is opposed by residents of Utah and Nevada and whose very rationale—the alleged vulnerability of US land-based missiles to a Soviet first strike—is now being drawn into question by serious strategic thinkers. In addition, numerous independent studies—including some by conservative groups such as the Heritage Foundation and the House Republican Research Committee—have shown that savings of up to $30 billion a year can be achieved by improving efficiency at the Pentagon. And Reagan should send Weinberger back to his office to think about US military strategy in the late 20th century, and the means needed to carry it out, rather than merely giving the military a go-ahead on every weapon it wants to build. (Weinberger might start by reading James Fallows's excellent book, *National Defense*.) Most of all, Reagan should try to build a national consensus on defense spending. He could be the last president to have gotten elected by distorting the defense issue, and the first to provide the country with steady, apolitical, long-term preparedness.

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How chow made history.

Food Fights

John R. Block, secretary of agriculture, has stated that food can be used as a weapon in international relations.

—News item

1939—An assemblage of the nation's most formidable culinary minds, joined by several of Europe's expatriate sauciers, are summoned to an underground cafeteria in the Nevada desert for development of a secret project termed "vital to the future of the civilized world." Their mission: to create the world's deadliest entrée, one that will render the enemy incapable of digestion.

The chefs are aghast at the prospect of employing their gastronomic skills in the service of barbarity. Some threaten to boycott the conference, but change their minds when the blintzkrieg breaks out, spreading blueberries across the map of Europe.

1940—The first outgrowth of this monumental colloquy (a head cheese made with raspberry jello) is a fiasco. Not only is it clearly digestible but it wins first prize at the New Mexico state fair.

1945—A recombinant form of beef jerky is developed and tested in several GI canteens before being dropped on the enemy troops. Despite massive gastrointestinal damage, they refuse to surrender. Just six meals later, the Allies bombard them with flavored chemical tablets which, when mixed with water and stirred, result in the most corrosive, virulent emetic known to man. The war ends and America makes a smooth transition to a peacetime menu. A diluted form of these tablets is later marketed to the public under the brand name Fizzies.

1946-60—In a gustatory epoch later referred to as the cold war, Russia and the US wage a fierce competition to create the most nauseating spread of cured meats and dips. Spies are discovered in executive dining halls and the most famous of them, Julius Child, is tried for revealing to the KGB the gustatory recipe for the clandestine powder in Orange Julius. By the mid-1950s, the Soviets have manufactured destructive dishes of their own; the US immediately institutes a civil defense program and the nation's scientists set to work on an early-warning antacid.

1962—Washington accuses Moscow of installing bases in Cuba for the purpose of launching tactical tamales. After a few hours of unbearable tension, the Russians, realizing they have no condiments, back down. Crews of short-order cooks dismantle the chili-filled pirogen that had been menacing Miami Beach.

Later that year, Secretary of Defense James Beard assures a jittery America by positing his theory of MAS (Mutual Assured Smorgasbord), claiming that an all-out cookout by the superpowers is by its very nature unwinnable and that therefore neither side will risk even an appetizer.

1964—Twenty-eight nations sign the first pâté taste-test ban treaty outlawing the use of Cuisinarts in the upper atmosphere.

1972—A new administration initiates talks with the Soviets regarding the limitation of five-star entrées. This is primarily the result of intense public pressure against the inflationary epicurean spiral that has forced cutbacks in necessary social programs like Gun Stamps.

1976—Despite ratification of the pact, both sides continue to accumulate vast stockpiles of victuals, especially canned vegetables. The US boasts of a lasagna, topped with melted gorgonzola and served with either marinara or meat sauce, that is said to be undetectable by radar ranges. The Russians counter with the world's first atomic knish, of which they produce 20,000. Moscow spreads the word (through a pseudonymous article in *Gourmet*) that these doughy warheads are targeted for major American population centers, that most are frozen, and that they're saving the kasha-filled ones for Washington.

1981—A fearsome new refection, the brainchild of Peg Bracken, is reported to leave the esophagus of its victim unharmed but to obliterate completely his taste buds, inducing loss of appetite and gradual starvation. No official name is given the dish, but insiders say it smacks of tofu.

Sooner or later—Mounting international hostilities erupt into world war. At first the superpowers are content to do battle with conventional fare and refrain from employing their apocalyptic viands, but the temptation of a first-course strike proves irresistible. Buttons are pushed, firing the microwaves. Nouvelle cuisine ravages the earth, eradicating all traces of life but receiving only one star from Mimi Sheraton.

James Gerard

James Gerard is a writer living in New York City.

Too many plots can make you ill.

The Paranoia Bug

MOST OF the US government goes on vacation during the summer but not, apparently, the CIA. This piece of intelligence comes from a number of foreign sources. First, from Cuba, came the report of an outbreak of hemorrhagic dengue fever, caused by a new and virulent strain called dengue-2. Fidel Castro was quick to diagnose the origin of the virus. In his annual 26th of July monologue to the nation, he

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charged the CIA with introducing the plague to his island. But as a researcher from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta pointed out, the dengue virus is so unstable and virulent that if, in fact, the CIA had succeeded in engineering the first reported case of a man-made dengue plague, it deserved the Nobel Prize for medicine. Castro does hold American biological technology in high regard. Shortly before making the charge that the US caused the epidemic, he took the precaution of arranging for the purchase of 300 tons of anti-dengue pesticide. From the US, of course.

While the medical division of the CIA was busy in Cuba, its avionics division was hard at work in the jungles of Central America, arranging, as Moscow recently reported, the crash that killed General Torrijos of Panama. Torrijos, who negotiated the Panama Canal Treaty, was a major source of stability in a country of crucial strategic interest to the United States. For the Soviets, motive in murder must seem a bourgeois literary device. (The CIA, presumably, kills for purely existential reasons, like Camus's Meursault, who killed a man "because of the sun.")

While all this was going on, the CIA naval division, and not Iranian monarchists, was hijacking an Iranian gunboat off the coast of Spain. That, according to Iran. (No doubt another attempt by Stockman to save on defense spending.) And then the Russian newspaper *Trud* reported that the CIA financed the blowing up of Iran's president and prime minister last week—a puzzling investment of CIA funds since that act of revolutionary justice benefited principally the Iranian left.

What is so remarkable about this string of CIA escapades is that the CIA managed to carry them off while at the same time skillfully orchestrating its own in-house coup: ousting a bungling outsider, covert operations chief Max Hugel, and very nearly nailing his boss, presidential pal and CIA director William Casey. And now from Moscow comes the story that the US was behind the shooting of the pope. The uncovering of yet another clandestine operation so outraged the administration that it was moved to protest to the Soviet Union. Admittedly, it is difficult to discern a motive for the US to kill the pope. But after Torrijos and Ali Rajai, who is to deny it?

IT SEEMS we are in the midst of another epidemic of cynical paranoia, a common species of political illness in which the paranoia is simulated in order to produce certain dramatic effects, like the tarring and feathering of one's enemies. It is important to distinguish this entity from its native American variant, neurotic paranoia. The most recent outbreak of the latter occurred in the US in the late 1960s and 1970s. It was characterized by a conjunction of malignant self-doubt with an unwillingness to believe that certain things—like the identity of John Kennedy's assassins—will forever remain unknowable. One result, among many, was the Assassination Information Bureau, an organization of obsessively earnest conspiracy enthusiasts who subsisted for almost a decade on a diet of Zapruder reruns and Jack Ruby appointment books. One of AIB's prime theories was that the Kennedy assassination was a by-product of internecine warfare between two CIA factions: the cowboys, representing new Sun-Belt money, and the yankees, representing the eastern establishment.

Fortunately the current outbreak of CIA phobia is not of domestic origin. Unfortunately it is becoming epidemic overseas. And, while it is often a source of entertainment, it can cause real harm. The story that the US was behind the seizure of the mosque at Mecca was enough to induce mobs in Tripoli and Islamabad to burn their US embassies to the ground and to kill two American embassy guards. There are enough people who believe in the great satan to make the big lie today as dangerous as ever.

BUT the paranoid virus does not respect international borders. We have our great satans, too. About a week after the Soviets put out the story that the US was behind the shooting of the pope, British television reported that the Russians were suspected of setting it up, presumably to weaken Vatican support for Poland. Here we have a faintly plausible motive, but as Hercule Poirot would instantly recognize, the means chosen render the hypothesis rather dubious. It is hard to think of Mehmet Ali Agca, a deranged neo-fascist Turkish fanatic, as an instrument of Kremlin diplomacy. And it would be deeply disappointing to believe that the people who perfected the umbrella murder and the fraternal invasion now have to stoop to wild shoot-outs in St. Peter's Square to thwart the likes of Lech Walesa.

But the climate is right for this type of thinking. Blaming the evils of the world on one's ideological opponents is not alien to the thinking of the US government. President Reagan has said that if we look behind any mischief in the world we will find the Soviets. Now, that kind of thinking can lead to dangerous misperceptions. For example, it is true that SWAPO in Namibia has Soviet and Cuban support, and that UNITA across the border in Angola has South African support. To conclude that SWAPO is a Soviet agent or UNITA a South African agent is simply to misunderstand the tribal and national roots of both movements. But confusing coincidence of interest with conspiracy is a game everyone is playing. As the propaganda war heats up, it might be best to pay a little more attention to the mere appearance of things, and a little less to the beguiling web of subterranean connections that are offered up as reality by cynical disinformation specialists and naive ideologues. Physicists seem able to live with their uncertainty principle. Politicians might try to do the same.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

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Michael Walzer and Paul Fussell
on the moral calculus of the bomb.

An Exchange On Hiroshima

PAUL FUSSELL's defense of the bombing of Hiroshima (*TNR*, August 22 & 29) is written, as he tells us repeatedly, from the standpoint of the ordinary GI. And that standpoint is human, all too human: let anyone die but me! There are no humanitarians in the foxholes. I can almost believe that. But Fussell's recital does remind me a little uneasily of the speech of that Conradian villain Gentleman Brown (in *Lord Jim*): "When it came to saving one's life in the dark, one didn't care who else went—three, thirty, three hundred people. . . ." And Brown went on to boast, very much as Fussell wants to do, that he made Jim wince with this "despairing frankness": "He very soon left off coming the righteous over me. . . ."

But we shouldn't be intimidated, and we shouldn't leave off, but accept the risks of righteousness. After all, Fussell's argument isn't only the argument of ordinary soldiers. It is also and more importantly the argument of ordinary generals—best expressed, I think, by the Prussian general von Moltke in 1880: "The greatest kindness in war is to bring it to a speedy conclusion. It should be allowable, with that end in view, to employ all means save those that are absolutely objectionable." But von Moltke, a stolid professional, probably still believed that the wholesale slaughter of civilians was "absolutely objectionable." With Fussell, it seems, there are no limits at all; anything goes, so long as it helps to bring the boys home.

Nor is this the argument only of GIs and generals. The bombing of Hiroshima was an act of terrorism; its purpose was political, not military. The goal was to kill enough civilians to shake the Japanese government and force it to surrender. And this is the goal of every terrorist campaign. Happily, none of today's terrorist movements have yet been able to kill on the scale of the modern state, and so they have not enjoyed successes as dramatic as the one Fussell describes. But their ordinary members, the terrorists in the foxholes, as it were, must think much as he does: if only we could kill enough people, not a dozen here and there, in a pub, a bus station, or a supermarket, but a whole city full, we could end the struggle once and for all, liberate our land, get the British out of Ireland, force the Israelis to accept a PLO state, and so on. To the boys of the IRA, to young Palestinians in Lebanon, that argument is surely as attractive as it was to the young Paul Fussell on his way to the Pacific in 1945. It is the same argument.

What is wrong with it? If war is indeed a tragedy, if its suffering is inevitable, then nothing is wrong with it. War is war, and what happens, happens. In fact, however, war imposes choices on officers and enlisted men alike. "There wasn't a single soldier," says an Israeli officer who fought in the Six-Day War, "who didn't at some stage have to decide, to choose, to make a moral decision. . . ." Fussell, who has written so beautifully about the literature of war, must know this to be true. And he must also know that there is a moral argument, different from his own argument, that shapes these military choices. Perhaps that argument is most often expounded by those professors far from the battlefield for whom he has such contempt. But it is an argument as old as war itself and one that many soldiers have believed and struggled to live by. It holds, most simply, that combat should be a struggle between combatants, and that noncombatants—civilian men, women, and children—should be protected as far as possible against its cruelties. "The soldier, be he friend or foe," wrote Douglas MacArthur, "is charged with the protection of the weak and the unarmed. It is the very essence and reason of his being . . . a sacred trust." Like policemen, firemen, and sailors at sea, soldiers have a responsibility to accept risks themselves rather than impose risks on ordinary citizens. That is a hard requirement when the soldiers are conscripts. Still, they are trained and armed for war and ordinary citizens are not; and that is a practical difference that makes a moral difference.

Consider how the risks of police work might be reduced, and how many more criminals might be caught, if we permitted the police to ignore the rights

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of ordinary citizens, to fire indiscriminately into crowds, to punish the innocent relatives of criminals, and so on. But we don't grant such permissions. Nor are soldiers permitted comparable acts, even if they carry with them the promise of success.

There is a code. It is no doubt often broken, particularly in the heat of battle. But honorable men live by it while they can. Hiroshima was a violation of that code. So was the earlier terror bombing of cities—Hamburg, Dresden, Tokyo—but Hiroshima was worse because it was even more terrifying. Its long-term effects were literally unknowable by the men who decided to impose them. And the effects were not imposed, any more than those of the earlier bombing, in the heat of battle, face-to-face with enemy soldiers who aim to kill and have already killed comrades and friends. Though there were soldiers in Hiroshima, they were not the targets of the attack (or else we would have attacked a military base); the city was the target and all its inhabitants.

Fussell writes (again) as a democrat, on behalf of "the low and humble, the quintessentially democratic huddled masses—the conscripted enlisted men manning the fated invasion divisions." Given that standpoint, one might have expected him to question the US demand for unconditional surrender that made the invasion of the Japanese islands seem absolutely necessary. There were people in the US government in 1945 who thought a negotiated settlement possible without an invasion and without the use of the atomic bomb. Surely some attempt should have been made—not only for the sake of our own soldiers, but also for those other "huddled masses," the civilian inhabitants of Hiroshima (and Nagasaki too). Why don't they figure in Fussell's democratic reckoning! If Harry Truman's first responsibility was to American soldiers, he was not without responsibility elsewhere; no man is. And if one is reckoning, what about all the future victims of a politics and warfare from which restraint has been banished? Given the state of our political and moral order, with which Hiroshima probably has something to do, aren't we all more likely to be the victims than the beneficiaries of terrorist attacks?

MICHAEL WALZER

I'M GRATEFUL to Michael Walzer for his courteous demurrer, but I think we're never going to agree, for our disagreement is one between sensibilities. I'd designate them as, on the one hand, the ironic and ambiguous (or even the tragic, if you like), and, on the other, the certain. The one complicates problems, leaving them messier than before and making you feel terrible. The other solves problems and cleans up the place, making you feel tidy and satisfied. I'd call the one sensibility the literary-artistic-historical; I'd call the other the social-scientific-political. To expect them to agree, or even to perceive the same data, would be expecting too much.

My aim in writing the article on Hiroshima was to complicate, even mess up, the moral picture. What Walzer does in his comment by playing on our anxieties, with terms like "terrorist" anachronistically applied, is to simplify it again. I was saying that I was simultaneously horrified about the bombing of Hiroshima and forever happy because the event saved my life. Both at the same time. I'll stick with William Blake:

> Under every grief & pine
> Runs a joy with silken twine.

I don't want to dispute data, but I think Walzer's not right when he says: "Though there were soldiers in Hiroshima, they were not the targets of the attack (or else we would have attacked a military base)." But Hiroshima was a military base, the headquarters of the Japanese Second Army, and the soldiers were the target of the attack: we dropped the bomb accurately on the corner of their parade ground and killed thousands of them. But our disagreement is not really about such facts, but about two different emotional and moral styles. If Michael Walzer thinks the "huddled masses" of Hiroshima and Nagasaki don't figure in my reckoning, he's not read carefully. It is because they do figure that I dwelt on the pathos and horror registered so touchingly in *Unforgettable Fire*. And because I don't think righteousness all on one side, I also dwelt on the deeper pathos and horror of the war's continuing. Walzer says of the bomb-dropping that its purpose was political, not military. I say that its purpose was political and military, sadistic and humanitarian, horrible and welcome.

My object was to offer a soldier's view, to indicate the complex moral situation of knowing that one's life has been saved because others' have been most cruelly snuffed out. I was arguing the importance of combat experience, alas, in influencing one's views on the ethics of the bomb. I observed that those who deplore the dropping of the bomb absolutely turn out to be largely too young to have been killed if it hadn't been used. I don't want to be needlessly offensive, nor to insist that no person whose life was not saved by the A-bomb can come to a clear—by which I mean a complicated—understanding of the moral balance-sheet. But I note that in 1945 Michael Walzer, for all the emotional warmth of his current argument, was ten years old.

PAUL FUSSELL

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A policy divided against itself cannot stand.

The Market And Mr. Reagan

By John Kenneth Galbraith

THE DISORDER into which President Reagan's economic policy and therewith his economic advisers have so suddenly fallen in these otherwise salubrious autumn days cannot be understood as an issue in ideology. It is not a question of liberal wisdom versus conservative obliquity, significant as, on occasion, that no doubt may be. It concerns the ancient and presumptively nonpartisan issue of the nature of the market. Mr. Reagan is being done in by a deeply damaging view of markets, or, to be more cautious, such a view is greatly threatening the ease, comfort, and comfortable applause in which, for a brief moment, his men rejoiced. And, as an especially bizarre touch, it is the stock market, one of the approximations to the classical market, which has seized on and is celebrating the consequences of the market views of Mr. Reagan's men. The subject is not one that should be left to economists; like nuclear arms control and the MX, it has a general citizen involvement which calls for general attention.

DRAWING BY DONALD GATES FOR *THE NEW REPUBLIC*

One begins with the two pillars of the Reagan economic policy. Both are now fully in place and there is no dispute as to their importance. On the one hand is the supply-side economics—the commitment to a vigorous expansion in economic output and income that among other things is to bring the increased public revenues that will offset the tax reductions that encourage this same economic expansion. Expansion will also be encouraged by relief from regulation and by reducing the social expenditures, thus putting the malingerers back to work. The companion piece is control of inflation, the most persistent disorder of the last decade and more, by a rigorous control of the money supply—as rigorous a control as may be possible of what, rather arbitrarily, is held in the modern world to be money. This is the triumph here, as earlier in Britain, of monetarism. Any idea has truly arrived when, like capitalism, socialism, communism, and creationism, it has become an *ism*.

There is no mystery, or should not be, about how monetary policy restrains inflation. It works through high interest rates, and tight lending conditions, to curb spending from borrowed funds. That this restraint might be in conflict with supply-side expansion should have been evident from the outset of the Reagan era. To expand and restrain the economy at the same time is difficult, much like walking uphill and downhill at the same time. That this was overlooked was a real triumph of faith, hope, enthusiasm, and the belief

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that, in economics, anything is possible. But the conflict is less or greatly more acute depending on the view that is held of the nature of markets. Markets are the key to understanding this policy contradiction.

Monetarists are men, and, one supposes, an occasional woman, with a deep commitment to the classical or near-classical market; this has long been the watermark of the University of Chicago, which, in turn, is the natural habitat of the monetarists. If one loves something enough, or is sufficiently so conditioned by education, one can attribute to it virtues that others cannot see or that do not exist. So with the monetarists on markets. The great corporations, the trade unions, OPEC, farm support prices, and the recent slash in wheat acreage do not substantially impair their market image. These are modifications or exceptions to the basic character of the market economy, matters on which petulant critics are disposed to harp. Only government social programs and regulations (the minimum wage being a notable case) are serious impairments. And these flaws can be removed by moving vigorously, as in these last months, against government expenditure and regulation.

IF THE market existed in pristine or classical form, monetary policy could operate against inflation without a wholly drastic effect on production. An increase in interest rates, and a drop in bank lending, would bring a shrinkage in demand. The first effect of this falling demand would be on the impersonally determined prices that no business firm controls. Prices would stabilize or fall and the effect would be passed along to flexible wages. Given stable or falling prices, another impeccable proposition, inflation is at an end. Production would be adversely affected, but not too much. This is the way markets are meant to work and, therefore, the way monetary policy is meant to work. There would be conflict with supply-side aspiration, but it would not be all that abrupt.

If, however, the pristine market does not exist or does not exist over much of the economy, then the sequence is very different. If a handful of corporations, 1,000 or so, have one-half to two-thirds of private production, and a strong handle on their prices; if these corporations deal with adequately stubborn unions; if there are smaller or local monopolies; and if there is an OPEC, the first effect of a shrinkage in demand is not a reduction in prices. It is a shrinkage in output and employment, and these must be fairly severe before the upward thrust in prices and wages is arrested. Monetary policy in such a market will still work; but as the experience of the automobile companies, the newspapers, International Harvester, PanAm, and the housing industry in recent months all show, it works in the organized sector of the economy only after it puts a terrific squeeze on firms and, thence, on unions. A recession must be engineered. Modern recessions are not wavelike movements inherent in the capitalist system; they are what monetarists induce and must induce to control inflation. Thus, the assault of the monetarists on the supply-side economists. It could hardly be more sanguinary.

But the whole is not yet. The assault is greater or less in accordance with whether the government deficit is large or small. If the deficit is large, as a consequence in the present case of the supply-side tax cuts and the generously increased military spending, the monetary policy must be more severe—there must be a greater clampdown in the form of yet higher interest rates and yet more restrictive bank lending. This is necessary to compensate for the expansive effects of the public deficit, to offset the added demand from public spending in excess of tax revenues. There is also some likelihood, as the British experience has shown, that monetary policy in a highly organized economy will increase this deficit as it moves people off private payrolls onto unemployment compensation and welfare. There are also some indirect effects that are a blow at supply. The high interest rates have an adverse effect on business investment; that is how they work. It is from business investment, in turn, that come improvements in productivity—it is such investment that some of the tax reductions were meant to stimulate. Additionally, as the British experience has also shown, when firms are operating at less than capacity, as monetary policy requires, they do not invest in new plants; and it is from new and technically more proficient plant that improvements in productivity also come. One shudders at what would happen if a serious supply-side economist meet Beryl Sprinkel on a dark street in Georgetown one night.

IT COULD be said, in resolution of this conflict, that the supply-side enthusiasm was not meant to be taken all that seriously. It was a solemnly functional justification invented by compliant economists to ratify a reduction in taxes, in the higher-bracket personal income tax in particular. There is a deep-seated and by no means novel desire on the part of people of income to have more after-tax income to spend themselves. But above a certain tax bracket, this cannot be offered as the case for tax reduction or, by those involved, even believed. Thus the supply-side innovation. There is much to this view of the tax reduction, but with the classical market, the supply-side economists would also have a case. It is not a good case, but it exists.

The case, to lapse mildly into technical jargon, is that a supply function relates business energy and initiative to after-tax income. And, likewise, savings and investment to after-tax return. And these functions are elastic—the more you pay, the more you get. This is in accordance with the market mystique; it bears a general resemblance to what the textbooks once taught and the very devout still believe. But, alas, this case, too, is crushed by organization, the organization that has invaded and partly replaced the classical market.

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The modern business executive, the decisive figure in the world of the great corporation, is, not surprisingly, an organization man. As such, he gives his best to the job which, generally speaking, is quite good. In principle, and possibly even in practice, he would be sacked were he known to be holding back on his effort because of his tax bracket or were he spending too much office time and energy (as Mr. George Gilder has alleged) in devising tax shelters and other forms of tax avoidance for his personal income. Yet it is on the release of such executive energy that the supply siders' supply function depends.

The position is no better as regards the smaller business man. Recurring once more to the British experience and our own in the housing and construction industry, he is the natural victim of a strong monetary policy—small business failures in Britain in these last years have been at record levels. What the supply-siders give in taxes, the monetarists take away in tight money and high interest rates. There is also a strong suspicion that tax reduction will favor spending rather more than saving. Finally, we have seen that investment in general gets squelched by monetary policy. Lower taxes may or may not encourage investment; there can be no doubt that high interest rates discourage it.

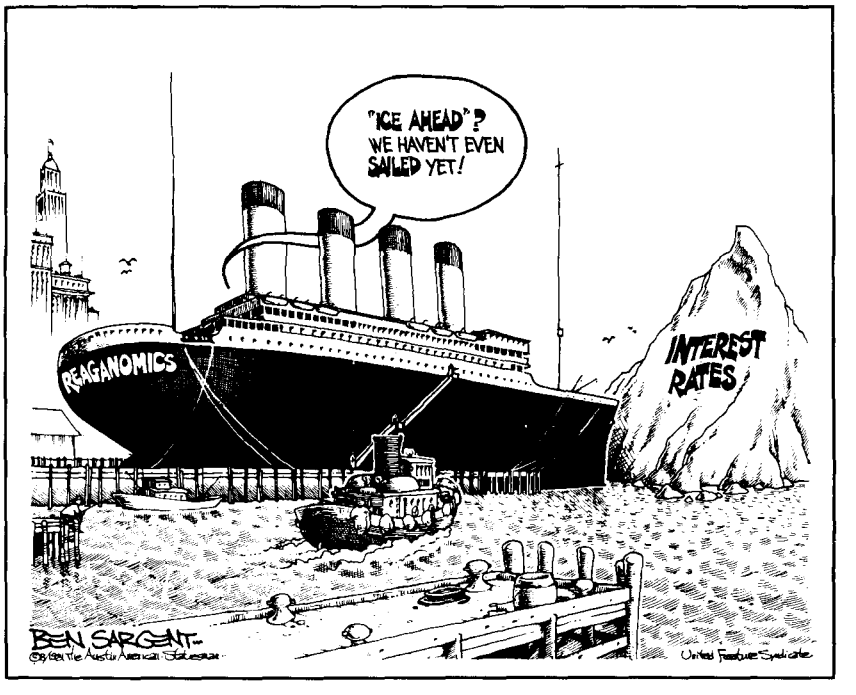
The erosion of the classically competitive market has thus been the nemesis of both the monetarists and the supply siders. And the source of a sharp confrontation between the two. And, the odd touch, another market now enters to publicize the problem and celebrate the consequences of the clash.

The stock market, in a general way, still functions as markets are meant to do. There are lots of buyers and sellers. No stock market firm has control or even influence over prices. Were this market like those in steel, autos, and chemicals, Merrill Lynch and one or two others might have taken charge, kept things stable. But this being an old-fashioned market, there was no chance.

THE WALL STREET analysts, who now figure prominently in any mention of market lore, have not been strong on the apposition between supply-side economics and monetarism. Emphasis has been on the large prospective deficit, the burden that this will place on monetary policy, the resulting high interest rates, and the yet more restrictive effect on production, employment, and earnings. Or there has been stress on the alternative (one to which as a pure guess I would lean), namely, a slightly relaxed monetary policy and yet more inflation. One supposes that most people who are active on Wall Street and most of those whom they serve rather like Ronald Reagan. They are certainly not adverse on purely personal grounds to those tax cuts. But it is obvious that they do not take seriously that great release in executive and investment energy, the associated increase in production and revenue, all in combination with a benign monetarist brake on inflation. For long in the American legend, Wall Streeters have been pictured as a peculiarly heartless race. But it was the poor they were assumed to assault. Now it is evident that they can also, in their pragmatic way, bite their own.

ALTHOUGH the classical market so loved is assumed to be a conservative icon, it is not exclusively so. A fair number of vulnerable liberals can still be persuaded that the market, with a little effort, can be retrieved. And there survives the belief that, with the right combination of monetary and fiscal policy, it can be made to serve. This faith was implicit in policy in the requiescat days of the Carter administration in the heavy reliance on monetary policy, a reliance that, one thinks, more than any conservative tide, was what returned Mr. Carter to Georgia. Come the next election, there will be Democratic candidates as well as Republican affirming their faith in the free market and in the traditional macroeconomics management that only that market allows. God, presumably, will guide their hand to a good result.

The escape from this dismal scene has very little to do with ideology or politics; it has everything to do with reality. Massive organization is here to stay; its upward moving force in the economy can be restrained by monetary means only at a cost that is greater than that of the disorder it addresses. A stern fiscal policy is indeed needed. The balanced and even overbalanced budget is not a conservative idea; it is a



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way of minimizing the reliance on monetary policy and the associated attack on investment, productivity, and employment. The difference between liberals and conservatives on this issue is over how the deficit is to be minimized—whether by taxes on the affluent or on their expenditures (and a sensible approach to the military budget and arms control) or by cuts in social expenditures that are extensively for the poor. But, inescapably, there must also be a direct incomes and prices policy in the organized sector, one that accepts that organization has invaded the market and that only by direct intervention can egregiously restrictive policies and recession be avoided. The market mystique that causes many on the liberal left still to resist such policy should be one source of encouragement for conservatives as they survey their scene.

Andy Young has a genteel fight on his hands.

Atlanta's Mayoral Mishmash

By Jack Bass

Atlanta

CAN ANDREW YOUNG come home again? That's the central question in the race for mayor here. In the end the answer will probably be yes, but a very grudging yes it is apt to be. The fact that Young is seen as the centrist among the three major candidates says much about the politics of Atlanta. The unlikely hope of the city's white power structure is Sidney Marcus, a well-liked but not well-known liberal Jewish state legislator who is trying to forge a workable biracial and bipartisan coalition. The third major contender is Reginald Eaves, who like Marcus is Jewish and like Young is black—so much so that a poll showed that most of Eaves's supporters don't consider him "too black for me," but believe he is "too black" to get elected. Such is the lineup in a city where almost 55 percent of the registered voters are black and which for eight years has been governed by a black mayor. Frederick Allen, the astute chief political writer for the *Constitution*, characterizes Atlanta's politics this way: "Everything is racial, but very little is racist."

The futuristic skyscraper hotels continue to rise downtown, six international airlines fly passengers in and out of the new $400-million Hartsfield terminal that now rivals Chicago's O'Hare as the world's busiest airport, 16 international banks operate branches here, and Atlanta remains the bustling hub of Dixie. But behind the Chamber of Commerce hype, this city faces the problems that typify urban America in the 1980s: white flight to the suburbs, fear of crime, and a gulf that seems to widen between the large black middle class and a larger group of poor blacks. Atlanta lost 70,000 residents between 1970 and 1980, a decline of 14.1 percent. Sixty-five percent of the city's 425,000 residents, but only 55 percent of the registered voters, are black. Still, blacks in Atlanta understand politics, and unlike perhaps any other city, a larger percentage of registered black voters have consistently turned out at the polls in the last decade than the percentage of registered whites.

Young would like nothing better than to win the October 6 nonpartisan election without the bitter aftermath of a runoff, which would be held three weeks later. But his pollster, Patrick Caddell, considers that "highly doubtful." Young's biggest obstacles are doubts that he can and really wants to run the day-to-day operations of a city with a strong mayor form of government and the widespread belief that he was handpicked and recruited by the incumbent mayor, Maynard Jackson.

Although he has the support of Jackson and the Kings—Coretta and Martin Luther (Daddy) Sr.—Young rejects as "rumor" the widely held view here that they "recruited" him. Last winter he turned them down when they urged him to run for mayor, saying that for the first time he was in a position to make some money and expressing a lack of interest in the job. "Andy told them the Lord hadn't spoken to him," recalls Grace Hamilton. The senior black in the Georgia legislature, a woman who has been described as "the Millicent Fenwick of Georgia politics," Hamilton long has been active in good government and civic betterment circles. She played a key role in drawing the congressional district boundaries that allowed Young to win election to Congress in 1972. This year

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she is one of four blacks among the ten on the Fulton County House delegation who are supporting Marcus, the delegation chairman. "Sidney has the ability to bridge the racial gap," she said. "I don't know whether Andy can or not. I don't think his skills are in the nuts and bolts of administration. . . . Atlanta needs someone tending to Atlanta rather than looking for interesting things to work on in the world."

AMONG professional and other upper-income blacks, those views are frequently echoed. Privately, they fear that Young as mayor would retain much of the same small coterie that surrounds Jackson and the Kings. Regardless of her symbolism, the widow of Martin Luther King Jr. is held in less than universal high regard among sophisticated black Atlantans. In the words of one, she is "too much of a professional widow" and "too self-aggrandizing," whereas "Sidney has been right on all the issues, and we need to show whites we can work with them."

There has been an intense "anti-Maynard" feeling among the downtown business elite who for years dominated Atlanta politics, so Young was surprised at being rebuffed by a group with which he believed he had established good rapport during his years in Congress. Instead, business is heavily bankrolling the Marcus campaign. Although Jackson's overall record as mayor has much to commend it, from the beginning of his first term he alienated the white establishment by cutting it off from the decision-making process. The words used most often to describe him by critics (black as well as white) are "pompous," "inaccessible," "aloof," and "egomaniacal."

At the end of a long day recently, Andy Young discussed why he entered the race, a decision that grew out of a complex mix of factors. "I decided I'm a public person," he said, "and there's nothing more exciting than America's cities. That's where the challenge is." He spoke with enthusiasm of using his world contacts to help make the city prosper. He said unabashedly that he plans to have a foreign policy for Atlanta, that Atlanta has enough going for it that his world contacts will come to him. "We're going to show Atlanta businessmen how to do business abroad and create jobs, and we're going to stay here and revitalize neighborhoods." He wants to make Atlanta work as a biracial city and to challenge Ronald Reagan by demonstrating workable alternatives. He wants to test ideas to regenerate the civil rights movement, which he sees as "an economic stage."

But the decision to run, he said, also sprang from personal factors. He soon got bored with traveling around the world for Young Ideas, his consulting organization, and came to find little satisfaction in making money. He didn't enjoy the lecture circuit. He wanted more time at home with his wife and his eight-year-old son, Andrew Young III.

Young acknowledged that he wants to develop Atlanta as a model for urban America. He sees this as a continuation of the struggles of the civil rights movement. "Everything we did in the civil rights movement was a model," he said. "We were getting something done on a national basis by starting in a single place. I'm still a reformer; I'm still an advocate of change." But when asked about specific plans, he said, "Everywhere we went in the movement we had a plan, and the plan never worked. But we would achieve our goals."

Finally, Young wants to be an activist again. "I'm tired of being a critic," he said. "The tragedy of Reagan is he doesn't know any better. The best thing we can do is show things that can work. I don't think you can battle Reagan intellectually." But he expressed admiration for "a lot about Reagan's style and administrative skill. I don't think he's hopeless. I'm cautiously optimistic and hope he can learn. He seems to have put the ideologues in isolation. His Voting Rights Act position and Supreme Court appointment are not so bad."

Although slow to get started, the Young campaign can rely on the experience of three successful congressional races and the campaign team that ran them. Campaign manager Stony Cooks and press secretary Tom Offenburger are capable, loyal staffers who have worked continuously for him since the civil rights movement days of the mid-1960s. An accomplished campaign organizer, Cooks is married to the sister of singer Harry Belafonte, who performed at a late August concert that grossed almost $130,000 and will net almost $100,000 after expenses. It was the chief fund-raising effort in the campaign, and it exceeded expectations. It also provided a breakthrough for Young with the business establishment. Allen Questrom, chairman and chief executive officer of Rich's department store, an Atlanta institution, served as co-chairman and gave Young a strong endorsement.

STILL, a perception that Young is "anti-business" is one of four basic image problems that he faces. The others are his controversial performance and forced resignation as UN ambassador, the charge that he "abandoned" his constituency by resigning from Congress to accept the UN job, and the contention that he lacks the skill to develop biracial unity. A 50-second radio spot by Jimmy Carter, which Young and the former president drafted together, takes on all four. Carter makes a strong endorsement of Young as "truly a good and strong leader" and says, "Andrew Young handled a difficult international assignment effectively and with sensitivity. . . ." Young shrewdly released the tape at a press conference.

An early July poll conducted for Young by Patrick Caddell showed him 31-30 over Marcus and each with almost equal strength among voters of the other race, with 15 percent of the whites for Young and 16 percent of the blacks for Marcus. More significantly, Young held a three-to-one lead over Eaves among blacks. The early release of this poll data was clearly a

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tactical effort to cast Eaves as a candidate who cannot win. Although Eaves enjoyed intense support from those who favored him, his supporters also viewed Young positively. The hope in the Marcus campaign is that Eaves voters will be angry enough about their man losing that they will stay home in a runoff.

TO UNDERSTAND both Marcus and Eaves, a bit of Atlanta political history is necessary. In 1949, the Atlanta Negro Voters League organized on a bipartisan basis. The Republican co-chairman was John Wesley Dobbs, a grandfather of Maynard Jackson. The league formed an alliance with the white power structure to elect honest, progressive mayors such as William Hartsfield and Ivan Allen, who projected the image of Atlanta in the 1960s as "the city too busy to hate." But politically, blacks had to settle for what whites were willing to give them. In 1969, the city elected its first Jewish mayor when Sam Massell put together a coalition of blacks and white liberals. His major achievement was MARTA, the rapid transit system for the metropolitan area. In 1973, however, Massell not only lost to Maynard Jackson, but also in desperation resorted to a racist appeal.

Although Jackson managed from the beginning to alienate the business elite which had given him some campaign support, he is viewed as an honest administrator and a moving political orator. He made affirmative action city policy and insisted that 20 percent of the subcontracts for the $400 million Hartsfield airport terminal go to black firms. The facility opened on schedule and with no cost overruns. Jackson remains generally popular with black Atlantans, especially those of the middle class, who, in the words of one black academic, "can be proud of his polished appearance and his holding his own in the white world." But Jackson often appears preoccupied with matters unrelated to the humdrum day-to-day operation of the city. One who was there recalls that when Jackson met with his campaign staff immediately after the returns showed he was elected mayor in 1973, his first words were: "I want to see you all here eight years from now and we'll go for the Senate." Political reality has long since shattered that dream.

In his first term, Jackson met head-on one of the most intractable problems faced by black big-city mayors in the south—white-dominated police with a reputation for brutality against blacks. In a showdown after police brutalized black demonstrators in an "illegal" protest march in 1974, Jackson fired the police chief and brought in an old classmate from Morehouse College. That was Reggie Eaves, a lawyer who had moved up the administrative hierarchy in his native Boston to become director of corrections there.

As director of public safety in Atlanta, Eaves revamped the police department, expanded patrols in high-crime areas, won cooperation from citizens by changing the image of the police from enemy to friend, and became highly visible with his aggressive style. He is universally credited with curtailing police brutality in Atlanta, and statistics show that crime dropped during his tenure. He resigned three years ago in a controversy that is now referred to here as "the cheating scandal," a story the Atlanta newspapers vigorously pursued. They reported that a group of black police officers were fed answers to questions before taking a civil service promotion examination and that Eaves was implicated. Although Eaves professed innocence of wrongdoing, he resigned under pressure from Mayor Jackson.

Whether or not Eaves was involved in the cheating scandal—and the evidence is filmsy at best—he remains identified with it in the eyes of the white community. Seven months after his resignation, he won election to the seven-member Fulton County Commission (the governing body for the county) with 70 percent of the vote from a predominantly black district. On the commission, Eaves has been an outspoken advocate on issues important to blacks, and he has campaigned nonstop for mayor, spending weekends and evenings attending meetings and rallies and picnics at churches and housing projects. Although the conventional wisdom here is that his greatest strength is among blue-collar and poorer blacks, the Caddell poll showed this group as the core of strength for Young, who embodies the legend of Martin Luther King Jr. King's portrait joins those of Jesus and often John F. Kennedy on the walls of the homes of poor blacks throughout the south, and in Atlanta they see Young as King's disciple.

SO THE strongest support for Eaves, paradoxically, comes from middle-class blacks. More paradoxically still, a distinguished characteristic of Eaves supporters in the Caddell poll was their belief that the murders of young black children in this city would have been solved much more quickly if the victims had not come from the lowest economic class. Eaves responded angrily to Young's release of the Caddell poll, contending that it's "common sense" that Marcus can't possibly get as much black support as Eaves would. A few conservative whites who have gotten to know and respect Eaves—who has made overtures for Republican support—are openly backing him, and his campaign will emphasize whatever biracial support exists.

Although the child murders are not a visible issue in the campaign, they have made crime an issue in the minds of all Atlantans. As a result, the Eaves campaign in the final weeks is emphasizing his role in reducing crime when he served as director of public safety. The issue also cuts for Young because sensitive whites are aware that the presence of a black mayor and black public safety director promoted stability during the ordeal of the murders. Yet Marcus, alone among the candidates, has expressed a willingness to raise taxes,

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if necessary, to upgrade law enforcement.

Part of Sidney Marcus's appeal is that he is a man who seems to enjoy listening. A businessman with a law degree from Emory University and a lifelong resident of Atlanta, Marcus is a quiet man who helps run a modest, family-owned construction company. A local controversy triggered his involvement in politics. He was angered by a decision to build a new highway regardless of the citizens whose neighborhood would be destroyed. He helped lead a neighborhood fight against the project, then ran for the legislature and won by 50 votes. That was 13 years ago.

As chairman of the diverse Fulton County House delegation during the last seven years, Marcus has emerged as a consensus-seeker who can bring blacks and whites and Republicans and Democrats together on Atlanta issues. In the face of the Reagan budget cuts, Marcus says his rapport with the rural-dominated legislature is essential to the well-being of Atlanta. Marcus also helped conceive a local option sales tax that would have rolled back property taxes, an initiative rejected 60-40 after poor blacks organized to fight it.

In an interview, Marcus emphasized that he doesn't "have a foreign policy." The mayor's job, he said, "is to mind the store. . . . I want to be a hands-on, 365-day-a-year administrator." The candidates all agree on the fundamental issues, so "the question is who can best address those issues," he said, and added: "I'm a great believer in the politics of inclusion. I believe you can invite a lot of people in over a pot of coffee and solve a lot of problems."

MARCUS is getting support from the Republican establishment. More than 50 Republican activists signed a letter endorsing him that went to fellow party members in July. The Marcus staff emphasizes that the Republicans came to them. He is likely to have $500,000 to $700,000 for the campaign, about double what Young is projecting. The Atlanta newspapers reported in early August that the big givers were breaking with the tradition of "hedging their bets" and were giving money almost exclusively to Marcus. The story quoted Charles Loudermilk, a conservative white millionaire who surprised many by becoming Young's finance chairman, as "surprised and disappointed" at the lack of support for Young. But Loudermilk later told me that the story itself had loosened things up and contributions were picking up. He believes the business community will soften more "as they come to realize he's going to win."

Unlike Young, Eaves has received more support from the big givers than his people expected. Campaign manager Robert Holmes expressed "pleasant surprise" at the number of $500 and $1,000 checks. Some of those checks reflect the fact that Eaves will in any event remain a significant figure on the Fulton County Commission, and that he takes votes away from the Young campaign.

Because the police do not harass it, the homosexual community in Atlanta has grown into one of the largest in the country. Although politically aware, it isn't a cohesive force. Individual supporters of both Marcus and Young, neither of whom is seen as a threat to tranquility, are working in the gay community.

THE Jewish community, a source of support for Young in his congressional races, is solidly for Marcus. "The only thing the Jewish community wants from Sidney is to make them proud," says Larry Woods, a respected journalist who is serving as press secretary for Marcus. Embarrassment lingers from Massell's descent into racial demagoguery in his 1973 campaign. Fewer than half of the 35,000 Jews in metropolitan Atlanta live in the city, where they comprise about three percent of the population. Like smaller Jewish communities throughout the nation, they tend to be highly involved in Jewish affairs and strongly identified with Israel. Because their enthusiastic support for Marcus is genuine it avoids the potential conflict of appearing to be anti-Young exclusively because of his controversial meeting with a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization. But tension remains. An Anti-Defamation League official who has discussed the issue with Young expresses a general concern not that Young is anti-Semitic, but that as mayor he would use his contacts to bring "Arab dollars" to Atlanta and that "those dollars won't come without strings."

Young retains a few loyal Jewish supporters from past campaigns, and he and Marcus both recognize the controversial issue is highly emotional and are treating it diplomatically. When a woman with fire in her eyes approached Young at a reception and cornered him about the PLO, he flashed a smile and responded, "And what do you want to know about the Police Ladies Organization?" In an interview, Young said his views on Israel remain unchanged from a position paper he issued in his 1972 congressional campaign. It was written by Stu Eizenstat—later President Carter's domestic adviser—and applauded by Jewish supporters. But both Israel and the Jewish community, Young added, "have moved far to the right." As for Eaves, although his father and grandfather both were religiously observant Jews, he has not been active in Jewish community affairs in Atlanta.

In July, Marcus challenged Young and his staff to a softball game. The two teams, almost evenly divided by race, played at the Atlanta Jewish Community Center, and several local political reporters served as umpires. The Marcus team won, 18-17, in the bottom of the ninth inning. The irony, said Young, was "we had as many or more Jews on our team." Atlanta survived the game—and with luck, it will survive a runoff, even if it means a good man has to lose.

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

'An Imaginary Past'

Harold Pinter is in love with time—not the neat unceasing sequence of the clock but the time in our minds, the time in which we live and remember and fantasize, time expansible and contractile, infinitely contrapuntal, time tyrannical and elusive. It has always seemed to him a prime locus for drama, as witness *Old Times*, a perfect double-meaning title, and *No Man's Land*, an attempt at a cubist play. And his *Proust Screenplay* has been rightly recognized by many on both sides of the Atlantic as a small masterpiece derived from the greatest artwork about time.

That screenplay is still unproduced, and conjecturally Pinter has used the chance to write the screenplay of John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a way to work off his frustrations—in the film medium—about time exploration. The Fowles novel is set in the England of the late 1860s, but the narrator is our contemporary, who keeps making comparisons with today, supplying references, adding footnotes. However one reacts to this device—my enthusiasm is mixed—it's clumsy for a film of this book. Narrators have sometimes been used to wonderful effect in films (*Diary of a Country Priest*, *Jules and Jim*, etc.), but there was always a recognizable *cinematic* need for them. That need can't be felt with the Fowles book. Yet merely to have extracted the period story and told it straight would have been to misrepresent it.

The solution, says Pinter, was suggested by the director, Karel Reisz, but Reisz knew the man to whom he was speaking: Pinter quite evidently leaped at the idea, possessed it, and flew. To make the screenplay at least equally as binary as the novel, Pinter has interwoven a present-day story strand about the actors who are making the film. Where Fowles commented today on the book he was writing, the actors comment today on the film they are making—comment, not in a direct way like Bergman's cast in *The Passion of Anna*, but by living through a story in their own lives between the shooting of scenes.

The intent is made immediately clear and is immediately arresting. The very first shot is of Meryl Streep's face in a mirror. (Mirrors recur throughout.) She is in period costume and is having her hair and face touched up. Then we see a film clapboard and slate, the camera pulls back, and Streep sweeps into the first long bravura motion of the film, striding down the long breakwater of Lyme Bay in 1867. It's a subtle, concise, provocative beginning, it sets tone and method at once. The film grows organically from that opening microcosm—although it doesn't grow to fulfillment.

First, however, let's look at what is splendid in it—which is a great deal. The production designer, Assheton Gorton, and his associates have provided a 19th-century milieu at the high level of *Tess* and *The Story of Adèle H.*; and their details in the contemporary strand wryly complement and contrast. The cinematographer, Freddie Francis, showed in *The Elephant Man* an insight into grimy Victorian England; he extends it here to some of the grander aspects of the era. Many of the period scenes are shot under a gray sky that gives them a unique, almost pastel palette; many of the modern sequences are shown in a kind of spanking fresh light. The music by Carl Davis aptly embraces and supports.

Reisz, the director, is home again. With his last picture, *Who'll Stop the Rain?*, made in the US, I lamented his unease, his purportedly brave statement of those commonplace American heterodoxies to which the tourist is susceptible. Now he is on familiar territory, literally and otherwise. This has been no guarantee of success for him in the past, but here it has brought out the best in him. He is absolutely sure (one feels) of how he wants every scene to look and move, and his confidence breeds conviction. He skillfully alternates between two kinds of dynamics, dramatic and pictorial. That opening shot of Streep, for instance, as she strides along the sea wall with the sea lashing at her, is a strophe of romantic drama. In a later scene, she sits leaning against a tree, one arm arched over her head, gazing out at the quiet sea, and one feels that the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, who obviously inspired the shot, would have approved it.

The editing is superb. Reisz has, in fact, written *the* book on the subject, *The Technique of Film Editing*, and here his work with the credited editor, John Bloom (brother of Claire, incidentally), makes us feel the intelligence, the vitality, of the rhythms and combinations. One instance: in 1867, Streep's character, a woman of tainted reputation, is being interviewed for the post of companion to a rich elderly puritanical woman. The camera lets Streep make her entrance into the old woman's drawing room as a Victorian actress might have done—except that, for a sliver of a second, Reisz flashes in a close-up of the beady-eyed old woman watching her. Thus to the Victorian theater, Reisz adds the film's power to include the "audience."

Meryl Streep plays two roles: the 1860s woman and the actress of that woman. Jeremy Irons plays two roles: the 1860s man and the performer of the part. In 1867 Streep is called the French lieutenant's woman because she has the reputation of having dallied with a visiting French officer, and she abets the repute. Irons is a London gentleman

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Arthur. A revival of the rich-playboy plot, too long and slow, but with bright dialogue, deft Dudley Moore, and scintillating John Gielgud.

The Four Seasons. It's like leaving your living room to see a bigger TV sitcom, but it has a lot of mundane laughs, well extracted by a skillful cast.

The Great Muppet Caper. The real raiders of the lost ark—of unself-conscious innocence.

Stevie. The being of the English poet, Stevie Smith, crystallized by Glenda Jackson, with Mona Washbourne wonderful as her aunt, in a small, exquisite work.

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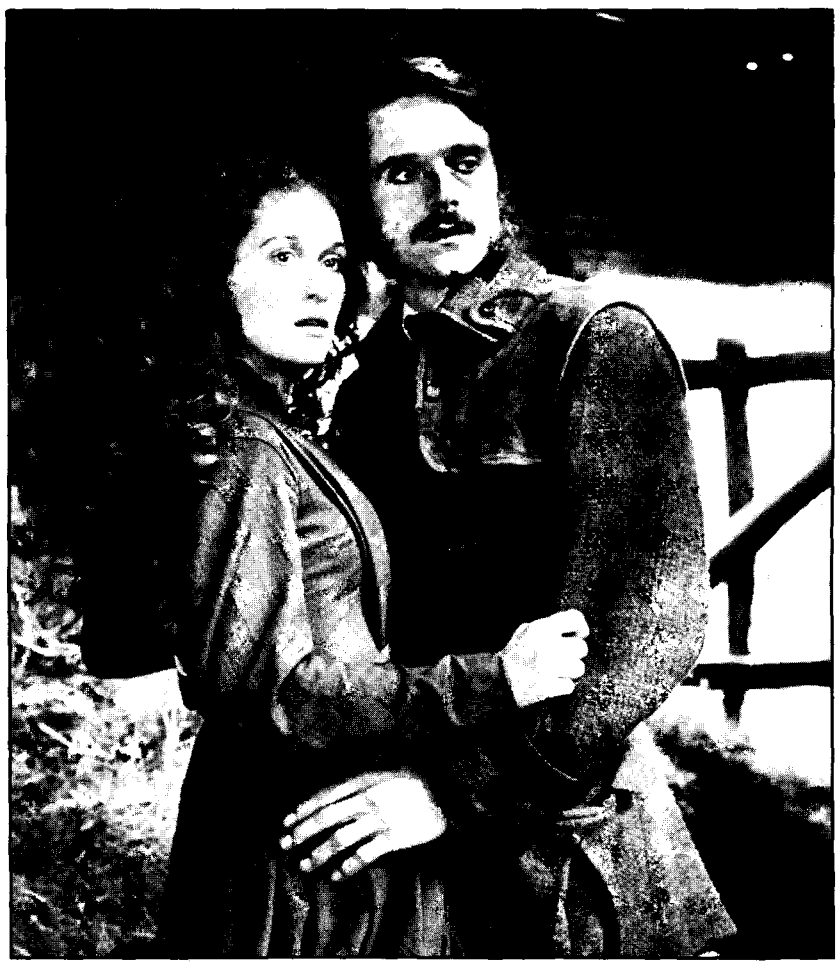
engaged to a rich tradesman's daughter who lives in the neighborhood—played by Lynsey Baxter, a paradigmatic English rose. He sees Streep while visiting Lyme, becomes infatuated, and eventually breaks off his engagement to devote himself to the tarnished woman. Fowles's novel has been read by many; still, because surprise is part of the structure, I'll say only that the surprise, the very structure of the period strand, is essentially romantic. "What was the Romantic movement?" asked Bernard Shaw in 1897, and continued:

> I don't know, though I was under its spell in my youth. All I can say is that it was a freak of the human imagination, which created an imaginary past, an imaginary heroism, an imaginary poetry. . . . Romance is always, I think, a product of *ennui*, an attempt to escape from a condition in which real life appears empty, prosaic, boresome. . . . For all that, the land of dreams is a wonderful place; and the great Romancers were . . . pure enchanters. . . .

Fowles is not a great anything, but the movement of his story holds like a dream. Unfortunately it also punishes like a dream: it leaves us frustrated and bewildered. I don't understand the behavior of the French lieutenant's woman except as an example of self-poisoning by dream values. Possibly it was boredom with her reality that drove her to create her own romantic character.

The contemporary story, about the actors who play the two lovers, is less romantic, in the literary sense, and though full of feeling, more sexually pragmatic. He has a wife, back home near London; the actress has a lover back in London. Together every day, the two performers have a passionate affair, which she ends when the last day's shooting is done. The modern story is no perceptibly applicable comment on the Victorian one; it has only the pathos of an affair begun, pursued, and necessarily finished, which is no more than the pathos of mortality. That's quite a lot, of course, but it's not specific in any sense to the patterns of the period story, in balance or contrast. When the film is over, we are left with a lot of lovely atmospherics, past and present, but no clear reason for the being of the work, particularly in its twinned form. It shows us how people behaved and behave in compacts of sexual passion, but the period story is so eccentric and the modern one so common that their juxtaposition is unenlightening.



MERYL STREEP AND JEREMY IRONS IN *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*

But the doing of it all is beautiful. (One nit: Reisz sometimes permits the pronunciation "lootenant" which is exclusively American, instead of the British "leftenant" which is used at other times.) Reisz has cast his picture perfectly, and he has got performances that reflect his cast's belief in him. Jeremy Irons is a young actor of sex and force and ease, with a sense of line and with sufficient brutality to make his gentleness truer. He has had extensive experience in British theater and TV, but this is only his second film role—the first being his vivid Fokine in *Nijinsky*. He has just finished the leading role in the British TV version of Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. With a little wisdom and a lot of luck, Irons can have a large career.

Streep is having one. After she finished shooting this lavish film last year, she did Alice in Elizabeth Swados's quirky musical based on Lewis Carroll at the Public Theater in New York. Clad in T-shirt and overalls, Streep sang and tumbled about, with no tinge of slumming but—I imagined—enjoying the difference from what she knew and what we didn't yet know about this film.

I cite two moments from her performance here. When the 1867 woman decides to give herself to Irons, he carries her into the bedroom, and she lies on the bed waiting for him to get out of his complicated Victorian clothes as quickly as he can. Reisz wisely keeps the camera on her the whole time. Her face is like an elixir of fate and fascination. And there is a scene—the best use in the film of its double structure—in which Streep and Irons, as the two modern actors, rehearse a scene, in casual modern dress, in a modern room. She is moving toward him, she tells us from her script, when her dress catches in a bramble, she stumbles, and he helps her. First, they merely "walk it," speaking the words and timing the movements. Then, they start over, and Streep, still in mod clothes, *does* it: with sheer, sharp imagination, steps into Tennyson and Millais; and the character, not the actress, walks toward us and stumbles. Reisz cuts instantly to the same scene in the period strand as Irons, now in costume, steps forward in the woods to help her. It's good direct-

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ing and editing; but the effect is as if Streep's power had forced the scene out of the informal modern into its true period and place.

My only stricture about Streep is that, while she easily sustains the vocal flourish of the period role, she sometimes lets her voice go dry in the modern role, something I thought she had overcome. It's as if she needs strong vocal demands in order to come up with sufficient voice.

Lynsey Baxter gives more than saccharine simper to the forsaken fiancée: we believe that Irons once wanted to marry her, which is not always true in "jilted" roles. Milton McRae, as Irons's servant, a sort of surly Figaro, and Leo McKern, as a friendly local doctor, get a special note, though every actor deserves one.

How I wish they would film Pinter's Proust script. Then perhaps he would not need to work off his "Proust frustration" on lesser material. This script is far above average from moment to moment, but it leaves us with more mystification than mystery.

But I have to add one more but. What a lovely two hours to watch and hear.

Robert Brustein On Theater

Who Needs Theater?

Anyone in my position, writing about the American theater these days, must wonder who his readers are; I certainly do. Critics for the daily papers and mass circulation magazines can be confident that their prose is being scanned by people curious to learn what to do with a night off in New York, but most of you, I suspect, don't descend into the theater district very often, and even if you did, it is doubtful that your hesitant jaunts into Nighttown would be influenced much by my curmudgeonly mutterings. The liberal, educated, magazine-reading public, once the solid nuclear core of intelligent theatergoers, seems to have surrendered its theatrical constituency in recent years, turned off by the various vexations of playgoing—the high price of tickets, the stronger pulls of books, movies, and television, and, most significant of all in my opinion, the increasing insularity of American life. With the new technology, we are told, our living rooms will have the capacity to be transformed into multiple entertainment parlors, wired to bring films, literature, games, sports events, even our banking and shopping transactions, onto a gigantic home screen.

With such amenities, why leave the house at all except to go to the office? And why exchange one's pleasant and habitual surroundings for an unfamiliar environment where the seats are uncomfortable, the streets unsafe, and the restaurant selected for an unconscionably early meal doesn't have a free table? People who spend most of their day feeling hassled simply don't care to be hassled at night, and the theater has come to represent the supreme example of avoidable discomfort and annoyance.

Hence the continuing saga of the sock-o smasheroo runaway Broadway hit. When you consider the trash we are willing to tolerate on the home screen and even in the movies, it is difficult to explain the kinds of demands we make on the stage. We are persuaded to see a play only by critical superlatives that would have been embarrassing enough applied to *The Oresteia* and *King Lear*; nothing less than the most inflated vocabulary of praise can mobilize our reluctant limbs to navigate the treacherous corridors of the Great White Way. We relax into our neighborhood movie house; we gird our loins and grit our teeth to go to the theater.

I am talking, of course, primarily about Broadway, though similar conditions obtain in the commercial theater districts of other American cities. The last two decades have seen the revival of a favored old relationship between crime, illicit sex, and the stage: hookers, pimps, porno shops, beggars, muggers—Elizabethan whores and Restoration bravos redivivus—have lately been crowding the thoroughfares of entertainment, so that the survival of the theater is now largely tied to urban redevelopment. In Boston, this blighted area is known as the Combat Zone—an apt description for a group of alleyways where one walks safely only when armed with brass knuckles and a billy club, and an evening on the town earns one battle ribbons and a week of R & R.

It is true that a number of recently built resident theaters have been designed for both comfort and safety, and it is therefore still possible to go to a play, in such cities as San Francisco, Washington, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles, without a four-month training course in the Special Forces. It is in such places that the habit of theatergoing on a regular, rather than casual, basis has managed to be perpetuated and it is in such places that the theater itself is likely to be perpetuated. It is easy to argue against the concept of season subscriptions, particularly that pre-paid tickets inspire feelings of obligation rather than enthusiasm, but the one thing to be said in their favor is their pattern of institutional support, and all that suggests about the value of theater as an art form rather than a transient succession of conversation pieces.

SUBSCRIPTION theaters are not uncommon in New York but rarely since the days of the Theater Guild have they enjoyed any significant continuing success. The Lincoln Center company attracted 34,000 optimistic subscribers last year before shutting down again for renovations possibly more artistic than physical, and the new BAM theater company in Brooklyn collapsed after two brief seasons of small and unenthusiastic audiences. Even the long-lived New York Public Theater is a single seat operation, probably in recognition of the fact that, being located near the Bowery, it is more likely to draw customers on a derelict basis.

If the American theater is afflicted by its physical conditions, it is pulverized by its costs. Apart from such frills as computerized lighting boards, stereo sound, and advanced projection equipment, the theater has benefited little

COMING:

R. W. B. Lewis on Emerson.

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from the ingenious technology now associated with its rival sister entertainments. The theater remains what the economists call "labor intensive," which is to say it still takes the same number of people to perform the same number of tasks as when Thespis first left the chorus for a solo turn. As a result, that rectangular piece of cardboard that gets you into a first-run movie for five dollars now costs as much as 35 dollars to admit you into a play, a consideration that may have some influence on your decision to stay home. For a time, some producers used to muse about substituting holograms for actors as a way of cutting production expenses, maintaining a company of high quality over a long period, and guaranteeing consistent performances, but as long as muscle and bone are required to flesh out a costume, it is improbable that theater tickets will cost substantially less.

IT IS, however, the muscle and bone of the theater that are most often proposed as its reason for being. Along with the opera, the symphony, and the dance, the stage is our last chance to see animate human beings engaged in fashioning a collective creative act. One might question how important this is to audiences conditioned to watching people perform on two-dimensional screens, and whether it is worth the tribulations accompanying the effort. The theater is associated with sweat; in movies and television, the sweat is wiped away between takes. Which medium has the advantage? And what advantage is there in being witness to the accidents of the theater—the torn costume, the inoperative prop, the door that fails to open, the late entrance, the miscues in light plots or act breaks, the understudy performance substituted without warning as a result of the illness of the star? The very nature of the theater seems to be accidental, for it is a perchance activity which is hostage to the whims and caprices of nature.

But we are nature's hostages, too, and in that sense the theater best reflects our own condition, our fortuitous fate. "We are not free," wrote Antonin Artaud, "and the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theater has been created to teach us that first of all." Artaud does not bother with the question—so pressing in an age when Henny Penny has become our most accurate prophet—as to whether we *want* to be instructed on such disturbing matters. Still, I can't imagine that many of us are very enchanted with the plastic and antiseptic state of our daily lives, or the way these are now being represented in the frozen images and isolating metaphors of our cultural technology. If the theater has a single advantage over film and television, it is its immediacy. Dramatic events exist in a continuum of present time, while celluloid and videotape, no matter how convincing or realistic the photography, are imprisoned in the past (so is narrative fiction, which declares its past condition with the author's "he saids" and "she saids"). The media are not happening; they have already happened. We are witnessing history, remote, aloof, involuntarily disengaged.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that we prefer to be alone or in small groups when watching television or films, while we want to be with lots of people when seeing a play. A crowded movie house annoys us; an empty theater leaves us feeling conspicuous and visible. Theatergoing is a communal act, moviegoing a solitary one, which may explain why the stage has proved less hospitable to the lures of pornography, that most private of practices, when first the films and now cable television have provided it with dark corners and empty rooms. Theatergoing, in short, is one of a dwindling group of activities that bring Americans into communication with each other, and it is, therefore, an enterprise that preserves some vestige of belief in the possibilities of society, if not of communion. It may also be one of the last remaining shreds of evidence that we are a people, and not just an isolated mass of frightened fantasists, barricaded in our homes, seeking safety from a sinister external world.

To my question, Who needs theater? then, I would reply, we all do—not for its superior aesthetic qualities, which it reveals so rarely, certainly not for its comfort or convenience, not even for its capacity to move forward in space and time in a culture of canned images, but because it represents social history in the making, both on the stage and in the audience. It signifies that community we have forsaken, the accidents and risks we would rather avoid, the sweat and gristle we prefer to disguise, the labor of humans working against odds. On the threshold of a new season no more promising than the last, the American theater represents an act of confidence—banal and dangerous and inconvenient like life, and, like life, still capable of inspiring hope.

A Case Of Sincerity And Obsession

On Heroes and Tombs by Ernesto Sábato

(David R. Godine; $17.95)

Although Ernesto Sábato's work is rather well known in Europe, where his first novel (*El túnel*, 1948) was championed by Camus, and praised by other writers of similar weight (its existential flavor went well with the mood of the day), the book did not earn him much lasting notice in the United States, even though Knopf was the first to translate it (as *The Outsider*) in 1950, six years ahead of the French. *Sobre héroes y tumbas* followed in 1961, and *Abbadon el exterminador*, completed in 1974, won him the *Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger*. As if divinely arranged by the muse of prose, the great and astonishing efflorescence of Latin American literature which, during the 1960s, the world became aware of, has been blessed with English translators of exceptional skill, dedication, and literary understanding. Gregory Rabassa has translated Asturias, Márquez, Cortázar, Lima, and Lhosa; Suzanne Jill Levine has done Infante, Sarduy, and Puig; Margaret Sayers Peden has given us our Fuentes; while many fine writers like Alejo Carpentier and José Donoso have also been made available; yet somehow Sábato kept slipping through the net (if any were drawn); but now Helen R. Lane, already noted for her translations of Octavio Paz and her masterful rendering of the superb and fierce fictions of the Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo (whose brilliant and inventive new novel, *Makbara*, she has

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just completed), has brought *On Heroes and Tombs* beautifully before us—some recompense for a 20-year delay.

Even as a sapling, Sábato leaned toward literature like an old tree long in the wind, so it is somewhat surprising to read of him studying mathematics and physics at the National University of La Plata; but one can imagine well enough how the young student, the tenth child in a litter of 11, sent away to school and now alone for the first time in a strange city, sought clarity, order, security, and calm in the emotionless realm of mathematics. (For this biographical material and other facts I am relying on the sole book on Sábato in England, Harley Dean Oberhelman's volume in the Twayne World Authors Series.) It would certainly not be the first time. His human concerns, however, required an outlet, and sent him toward the political left. The anarchist who figures so importantly in *On Heroes and Tombs* is based on an actual association with the movement. Oberhelman reports another incident of great significance for Sábato's development. While attending a Communist Youth Conference in Brussels, and planning to leave there soon for the Soviet Union, he has a violent recurrence of his youthful insecurities, and flees to Paris where he sinks into a stolen text of mathematical analysis.

Sábato was 26 when he received his doctorate, and he did well enough to be recommended for study at the Curie Laboratory in Paris where he worked with Irene Joliot-Curie. At that time his repudiation of science and his serious literary efforts began. Fragments of an unfinished novel from this period will find their way into *On Heroes and Tombs*. Under the influence of André Breton and other surrealists, Sábato began to explore the psychic as well as the physical world. There is no question that his own illness literally turned him inward. Nevertheless, after a brief stay at MIT, he returned to the National University as a professor of theoretical physics, and remained in this post until 1943, when difficulties with the Perón government, in addition to his increasing desire and determination to write, decided him to resign.

I DRAW this dim little sketch because a factor fundamental to Sábato's concerns and career as a writer is nevertheless clearly outlined by it. The fact that what it represents is an elementary philosophical mistake would not necessarily matter in the case of most writers—literature is literature, not logic—but it matters a great deal in Sábato's. Because—as it appears—Sábato had sought refuge himself from a world of anxiety and unkempt passion by entering the field of mathematical physics, subsequently to return to that other—opposite—human field of feeling with a sense of the prodigal, and like one who has been "born again," even if unsaved; he supposed that science was such a haven for all men, and furthermore that science itself was an elaborate hypocrisy, because its vaunted efficiency and objectivity, its certainties and successes, hid a sterile emptiness; it was a pack of lies designed only to make men comfortable; first, materially, by supplying them with satisfactions and comforts (thereby binding them to pleasure); second, conceptually, by allowing them to believe in a knowable and orderly world, and permitting them to escape any direct confrontation with the self by substituting for it a "custom-made" character and a soil-resistant soul.

To imitate Sábato's own sort of simile: it is as if I supposed, because in my former career as a highwayman I had once hid in a hollow tree to escape the sheriff's hot pursuit, that all trees were hollow by contrivance, and grown only for the purpose of concealment by crooked arborists.

THROUGHOUT Europe, during the time Sábato was writing his first novel and divorcing himself from science, armchair analysts of the Human Spirit and our Anxious Alienated State of Absurd Existence initially felt X, and then, when a crowd came, often Y: that World War II had been fought by machines which had then made machines of men; that the knowledge which had so improved our efficiency at murder had made us murderous; that reason, not having been used to reason, only to rationalize, was useless; that certain ideals, never pursued, wouldn't work; that traditional values, having been abandoned, did not exist; that science, a tool of the bourgeois capitalist system certainly, was itself sick as a dog schooled in how to be vicious on command (or had *it* trained its keepers to growl?). Should we wait till all the proles are princes, when science, thought, and life will be put right, or else? They remembered, these critics of culture, the architects and artists who worshiped the machine, extolled speed and Mussolini, built boxes out of the harsh modern materials of camps and bunkers; they remembered the fascism of the Futurists, the dandyism of D'Annunzio; they recalled the promises of improvement in the conditions of human life which science was said to hold out like a bouquet—and the flowers of evil which had, in fact, bloomed. They counted the lies of the politicians as if lying were new to them and the lies fresh. The long, complex, and imposing tradition of the West had failed; progress was a bad joke, business exploitive, the state corrupt, the church an impotent falsehood; and one could not help but hear inside the painful outcries of the communists, with whom many existentialists sympathized and with whom they stood around on streets to rattle and tambourine as though playing Salvation Army, more than one kind and quality of complaint: that of the disillusioned humanist, the failed saint, the guilty technician and researcher, the embittered artist, the mournful adult, the disappointed child. Sábato gives each a voice, although each voice is his, because back in Argentina Europe seems stale, sometimes simply an immigrant, as Sábato's Italian family had been; something basic to the New World, of course, yet incomplete. The communists cannot collect him. Truth is personal, and Marxists worship science and believe in progress. Truth is unprincipled but deep and demanding, yet for too many others—Marxists, existentialists, and pragmatists alike—it is fluid and temporal and expedient. Soon Sábato is neither X nor Y, and alone; the whirl of opinions sickens him; he sees the wrongs of the left and the right like ropes around one another's necks; he accepts posts, then resigns; he writes essays and then watches events retract them.

TRUTH IS personal because it's within the person. But. But. And Sábato's doubts would fill a cave with bats. But the person is so frequently a fraud. We are dressed in deceit. Our own skin crawls to seek relief, as though all it was was a sack for shit. So when we seek what shall we find? Perhaps the marvelous message will be, as in *Finnegan's Wake*, scratched out of a dung heap by a bird—Belinda—whose name signifies the snake.

The novel can be a retreat and a

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deception, too, particularly when it seeks the purely literary effect, extols form, plays intellectual games (as Sábato believes Borges's fictions do); when it thinks of itself over-grandly as Art. (*On Heroes and Tombs* contains a tasteless attack on Borges which is, like the dig at Madame Curie and several of its attacks on women, contrived and petty.) Sábato's position—as it seems from my very different yet identical point of view—is rather well put by Marcuse: "The aesthetic necessity of art supersedes the terrible necessity of reality, sublimates its pain and pleasure; the blind suffering and cruelty of nature assume meaning and end—'poetic justice.'"

On Heroes and Tombs is, in this sense, an artless book. It does not desire to give life a meaning, a design, *that is not there*. The shape it takes should be the shape of life. Its confusions of time and place, style and technique, points of view, tones and intensities; its mix of essay, dialogue, and interview, reality and dream: all are signs of sincerity. The awkwardness of it, sometimes, is a sign. The passion of it is a sign. This novel not only describes, but is itself a search, a painful passage through danger and darkness, through the interior, across the spotted soul, the Africa of its author. But our problem is that *On Heroes and Tombs* is a very artful book indeed—indeed it is overly artificial and contrived, sometimes; hammered together in a hurry like a jakes (though not with a haste involving time); for it is also a one-holer, with the hole's deposit—money in the bank.

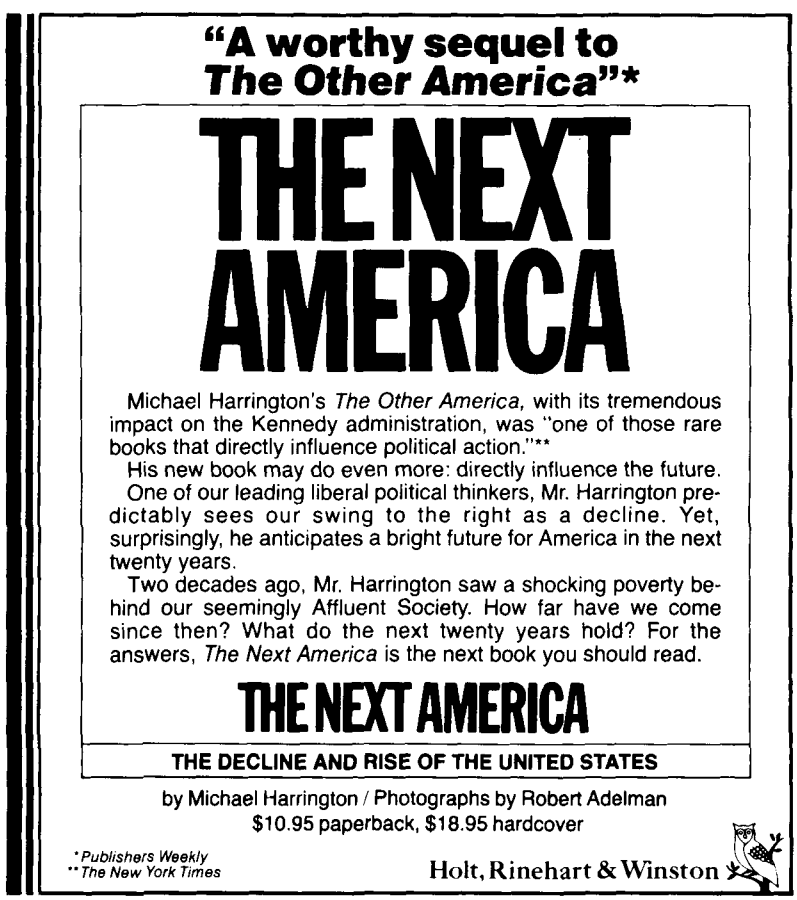
ERNESTO Sábato confesses to being a writer with an obsession, an obsession which is not quite clear to him, and which he is driven to define and to drive away by writing. The compulsive act, in this case, is writing itself, and the aim is a kind of purification. There is a secret inside the self, which means that the self is hiding something from itself, is lying to itself; but the search, as Sábato sees it, is not for some specific peculiarity which will explain his own problems with life, but for some fundamental truth which he would, in effect, be uncovering and uttering for all men.

The psyche which doubts itself, deceives itself, opposes itself, betrays itself, is split; and this novel is divided, too, into four parts and personalities, not all of whom know what others are up to; a condition which can bewilder the reader as well. There is first of all Martin, a young innocent who becomes obsessed with a mysterious, enigmatic, somewhat older and very beautiful woman, Alejandra. With a naiveté so persistent it becomes annoying, Martin flounders after his beloved, who deeply returns that love, but in an intermittent, almost willfully capricious way. She is a victim of epileptic seizures, religious and atheistical manias, a promiscuous eroticism from which Martin receives no benefit, and a sense of defilement that soils every act she performs and object she touches. Her father, Fernando, is the central figure of the book, dominating it even when he is not immediately present, and when we first hear of him, we read of madness and blindness at the same time. Finally, there is the wiser, more mature but passive observer, Bruno, who becomes a confidant of Martin and his mentor.

We may grade these selves in terms of their distance from the light. Fernando lives in the world of darkness, the sewer of the self, whereas Bruno remains where he can see. Martin and Alejandra represent the offspring of these selves, one innocent, one defiled, one male, one female, one drawn toward darkness and profligate lust, the other seeking salvation. There also are, then, among the members of mankind, and among the people who populate the self, four kinds of relationship: the friendship of Bruno and Martin, the decent love of Martin for Alejandra, unsullied by selfishness, the guilty passion which Alejandra fears she will make of it, and which she experiences with her other lovers, and the incestuous, criminal kind of self-love which Fernando represents.

Just as Sábato's earlier novel, *El túnel*, began abruptly with the report of its principal event (the narrator's murder of his mistress), so *On Heroes and Tombs* commences with a laconic police notice. It appears that some woman has shot her father, and then, locking herself in a tower room with him, has set fire to it. This sort of opening is perfectly appropriate because all psychological investigations take place after the fact. In this case, an act of criminal atonement follows the sin of an incestuous love. The same report states that a manuscript in the father's hand has been found in his apartment. This manuscript is reproduced as the third, and surely the most famous, section of the novel: "*Informe sobre ciegos*"—"Report on the Blind."

Fernando is obsessed (as most of the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characters are, in one way or other, and as Sábato admits he is), which means there is a thought which is both so forceful and so wicked that it must be displaced and repeatedly repressed; consequently the obsessive idea is accompanied by compulsive acts. Because the pressure of the thought is so continuous, doubts always arise: have I really done the right thing; have I rid myself of it this time? Obsessive idea, compulsive action, constant doubt, cloacal imagery, arson, Oedipal fears: all are here as perfectly as Freud reported them in his famous "Rat-man" case. And the notion that drives Fernando mad is that of blindness. His part of *On Heroes and Tombs* takes the form of a memoir, scientific in intention though not in style or structure, of his penetration of that sightless world, a realm and a group which his paranoia credits with organization, power, and a limitlessly malicious purpose. This document, written separately by Sábato, capable of standing by itself, and connected with the rest of the book only thematically, is a powerful, distraught, sometimes hysterical, certainly offensive, yet magnificent depiction of the realm of the unconscious; it is a descent, like Dante's, into Hell.

In addition, there are those who like to sail alone around the world; they shut themselves up in towers to write or watch for fires; in huts encased in ice they give up their lives to loneliness; who hunt for pelts in the mountains or are driven with aimless intensity from place to place like sand through a desert; fly solo, take to the woods. Searching for a second self, they dislike distraction. They want something to pit their strength against: angel or shade or element of nature which will assume the shape, and become the substance, of their enemy within.

FERNANDO is such a solitary type. He tells us how his obsession with the blind begins (innocently enough, of course), and how he starts to observe and follow—shall we say shadow?—them; how they hear him watching; how they lie quietly in ambush; how they plan and persevere like a wish which will never relent but leans against the eyes like an ache. He distinguishes between those who have been born blind and lived always in the night, whose crime in that sense precedes their birth and is truly ancestral, and those who have become blind, who have been struck dark by fate, as we all shall be, since death is darkness, blindness, too; he describes the fraternal antagonism of these two kinds: it is that of the desire which has never been recognized, given a name, and the one which has had a sight of life before being sent away like the sun at the end of a day. He emphasizes their patience. You think your love for your daughter is pure, but there will be a moment of weakness and your thoughts will fly into her like a penis. They wait.

Finally Fernando follows a blind man into a building; he passes through dark empty rooms, discovers trap doors and pries them up, descends into basements, moves among tunnels, has a paralyzing encounter with an imposing and silent blind woman—in the dark, we know, desire sees best of all—and then, while in a faint from his fear of her figure, endures dreadful dreams, one of which culminates in an attack on his eyes by a bird—strange, symbolic turn, because when a boy Fernando had blinded birds for sport, those creatures of eyesight and air, emblems of the spirit—so that now he has suffered the Oedipal injury he fears and deserves, the law of the talon, an eye for an eye.

We are symbolically blind, Sábato seems to be saying; we fail to notice one another really; we touch only with the tip of an unfeeling cane (another phallic image); hence we live in isolation, out of all reach, surrounded by our own misunderstandings, unreceptivity, guilty passions, filth. We say we see to indicate we understand; the eye is the first circle, Emerson writes. It is the organ nearest the mind, and the sign of its sovereignty. Yet we have put it out. The eye, moreover, is instantaneous in its work. It does not see by steps and theses and deductive roundabouts. It is itself an instrument which allows others to see us, for our eyes are eloquent. They idolize. Yet we have put them out.

Fernando continues his journey through the sewers of Buenos Aires, the intestines of the psyche, suffering as he goes along various bodily alterations into early stages of evolutionary existence. At last he finds himself in the Blind Woman's sealed womb, or so it seems it must be to this reader. He copulates with this grave matriarchal ghost in the gray insubstantial way which dreams permit, before discovering himself like an awakened Alice back in his above-world rooms.

Other sections of the book are at pains to place this inner search inside the public history of Argentina, which accounts for the *Heroes* in its title. Yet are they not heroes because they are buried in the air, in the light, as is the legendary Argentine leader Juan Lavalle (whose story is told twice in this book), because his fleeing legions held his body in the saddle, vowing their enemies

THE DRINKER

not today will I knife
any money out of her flowered pig
for a drop of anything
even though it could be holy water
cleansing my blood
like confession
today I think twice
about the liver burning down
to a polyp of wax

and will not hear my father's voice
sounding like the wind
through old drainpipes
reading his psalms to an empty church
"so panteth my soul after thee, O God"

or listen to high rises whispering
over my head while the pavement
moves out from under me
like a rubber carpet

today I stop counting in threes
making everything add up saying
mother-father-me mother-father-me

now before I feel myself doubling up
and my brain curling
like a fetus in formaldehyde
I take the first step now today

GINA WHITE

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would never have his head, until the flesh fell from the bones, and he became apocalyptic?

The young woman, Alejandra, is pulled between Martin and Fernando, between good and evil and all other Manichaean principles our author can invoke; but what love which contains desire like a flow of blood is not another love of one's father or mother? So Alejandra feels she can only be a temptress. Finally, in a phallic-shaped room regarded as a mirador and point of vantage, Alejandra kills her father with the symbol of his penis, and destroys herself with hers—flame—the purifying fire of a passion turned against itself.

That leaves two of us: Bruno and Martin—the innocent we are, the man we would become—free of evil only by virtue of the sacrifice of the feminine.

Which one of us remembers now that Borges is blind.

It is not what one could call a nifty conclusion, and the promise held out at the novel's close is both faint and displeasing; displeasing because the sacrifice has been too great, and the blame misplaced; faint because we know from our reading that Sábato believes deeply in the reality of evil, in the hell that each man is (and hasn't he suggested for us a punishing diet of our own continuously recycled shit?); whereas for the kingdom of heaven, or the reality of the good, he has only hope.

William H. Gass

William H. Gass, author of *The World Within the Word* (Godine), teaches philosophy at Washington University.

Pontificator To Presidents

The Speculator: Bernard M. Baruch in Washington, 1917-1965 by Jordan A. Schwarz

(University of North Carolina; $27.50)

"I am a man of legend—a man of many faces," Bernard Mannes Baruch [1870-1965] once cautioned an adoring biographer. And so he was. To the public he was Washington's park-bench sage, the patriarch who had brought order out of chaos in World War I and given wise counsel to the movers and shakers of American policy for a half-century thereafter. To the movers and shakers he was a meddlesome public presence who had to be appeased but who could also be used. To the intellectual community he was a shallow speculator who had bought his way into the corridors of power and insinuated his unique blend of 19th-century laissez-faire and 20th-century corporatism on a malleable nation. To Jordan Schwarz, professor of history at Northern Illinois University and author of this impressive public life, Baruch was all of that and considerably more.

Schwarz has no quarrel with Harry Truman's observation that the onetime Wolf of Wall Street was an "arrogant, opinionated . . . old goat." Neither does he challenge the view that Baruch was a supreme self-promoter. Beginning with a $10,000 fee to John Foster Dulles to compose a book-length rejoinder to Keynes's *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* under Baruch's name, he employed a stable of writers—Herbert Bayard Swope, Marquis James, and Samuel Lubell were the most luminous—to draft his speeches and publicize his activities. Syndicated columnists were his speciality. He wrote off a $50,000 loan to David Lawrence, who later founded *US News and World Report*. He frequently entertained Mark Sullivan at his baronial estate in South Carolina, and he often took Frank Kent on hunting trips to Scotland. Most important, he co-opted Arthur Krock. For much of Krock's long tenure as the *New York Times*'s resident political philosopher, reports Schwarz, his economic writings "were mere echoes of Baruch's words."

The source of Baruch's influence was his hold on key members of Congress, particularly southern and southwestern agrarians. Through unsecured loans, lavish hospitality, and shrewdly placed campaign contributions, he became an

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ex-officio member of the Senate Club. Yet—and this is crucial to *The Speculator*'s main focus—Schwarz discounts Paul Samuelson's assertion that Baruch "was always to insiders, a light-weight authority." He also challenges John Kenneth Galbraith's cavalier dismissal of Baruch as a magnificent fraud, "a man of self-inflicted importance." Baruch, insists Schwarz, was a man of synthesizing intelligence whose economic analyses were often insightful and prescient. "The Old Man," wrote David Lilienthal, the former chairman of TVA, "is a tough baby who puts questions in a dramatically sharp, tough way." Another witness is Henry Wallace. On balance, that enigmatic figure concluded, Baruch "did more good than harm." By the end of this long and detailed study Baruch looms as more enlightened than many liberals on some issues and more enlightened than most conservatives on almost all issues.

Schwarz did not come to that construction easily. In a thoughtful 1970 monograph lost in the recent wave of revisionist studies of Herbert Hoover, he addressed the notion that Hoover failed as president because he lacked congressional support. Quite the contrary. Schwarz found that the Democratic leadership not only gave Hoover almost everything he asked for until the late spring of 1932, it did so under Baruch's heady spell. Unfortunately, both Hoover and Baruch were too committed to voluntarism and a balanced budget to ask for enough. To this book, so the internal evidence suggests, Schwarz brought a preconceived dislike of Baruch and a fierce resolve to destroy the legend the Old Man and his acolytes had created. The result is more than a little irreverence. One senses Schwarz's pleasure in quoting the quip of an acquaintance of Baruch: "He was always generous to the deserving rich." And one shares his relish in relating how the great speculator "arranged" to have his bust placed in the Army War College beside those of Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon. But one grows weary of the conniving or self-serving twist he gives Baruch's almost every action.

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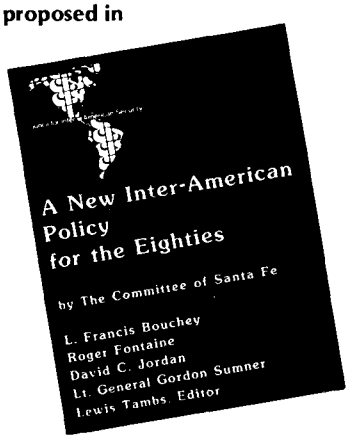
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WHAT SAVES *The Speculator* from emerging as the polar opposite of Margaret Coit's romanticization of 1957, *Mr. Baruch*, is Schwarz's dedication to literal truth. His penchant for ascription rather than description makes it difficult to get inside the man, and his cynicism drains his characterization of its residual warmth. Yet, by a kind of point-counterpoint, he does enable the reader to perceive intellectually, if hardly emotionally, that Baruch *was* a generous human being of higher public purpose than most of the operatives he contrived to manipulate. Schwarz argues relentlessly that Baruch's concern for the commonweal derived from his surpassing vanity—there's more glory in being remembered as a statesman than as one of the world's richest men. But he also avers that Baruch's nobler interests reflected the idealism of his father, a brilliant and comparably vain physician who edited three medical journals and virtually crusaded for public health. "Now that you have the money," Dr. Simon Baruch admonished his son rhetorically, "what are you going to do with it?"

For all *The Speculator*'s deficiencies as biography, it soars above the ordinary as history. Schwarz is thoroughly conversant with economic and organizational processes, and he unravels both the essentials and the nuances of Baruch's involvements with consummate skill. Schwarz knows when Baruch was right and when he was wrong, when he was inconsistent and when he was simply "going along." He gives him greater credit for his leadership of the War Industries Board of World War I and for his role in halting inflation than does Robert Cuff in his superb monograph on that agency. He faults Baruch for supporting the WIB's premature dissolution after the Armistice. (He was consumed by ambition to restructure the international economy at Paris.) And he scorns his refusal in 1919 to become secretary of the treasury, where he might have influenced reconversion constructively.

At root, Baruch was a sophisticated economic fundamentalist. He abhorred unbalanced budgets, sanctified the laws of supply and demand, and feared inflation's disruptive impact on the social and economic order; a devoted Wilsonian, he also believed fervently in his wartime leader's vision of a world free to trade. He had slight faith in legislative solutions to economic problems, though he did favor unemployment insurance, eradication of farm tenancy, and some form of Medicare (the legacy of his father). Capital formation and investment, in his view, were the catalysts of economic progress, general uplift, not leveling, being the ultimate goal. That meant sales and other regressive taxes; and when FDR tried to maintain high taxes on corporate "economic royalists" during the recession of 1937-38, Baruch opposed him publicly. Concurrently, his economic horizons broadened. In a *volte face* on the balanced budget, he advised a Senate committee that government spending to stimulate employment and supply relief should have priority.

Out of Baruch's experience with the WIB in World War I also came the conviction that resource allocation and planning were the bedrocks of economic stabilization. Like Hoover, with whom he maintained an uneasy working relationship, he preferred that the controls be indirect and that planning be done voluntarily by extragovernmental bodies of business, farm, and labor leaders. And, like Hoover, he became one of the early architects of corporatism. But largely because he had fewer illusions that business would voluntarily put the public interest above private interest, Baruch's post-New Deal corporatism embodied considerably more statism than that of the free-market paladin Herbert Hoover.

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Despite a substantial contribution to industrial mobilization during World War II, Baruch's influence never reached the level of 1918. He fought hard, and to some extent successfully, to impose price and production controls early in the war; and for that he deserved the nation's gratitude. But he failed abysmally in his grand design to control inflation after the war. Truman would not listen; and though Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson seemed to listen, they did not hear. The trouble, complained the aging statesman without portfolio, was self-interest. Business wanted high profits, labor wanted high wages, farmers wanted high prices, and everybody wanted low taxes. The trouble was also freedom. No one, least of all Baruch's old Wilsonian friends, was willing to accept the kind of coercive public interest corporatism he had come by then to espouse.

Baruch also failed in another large, but strictly subsidiary, aim: the creation of a United States of Africa to harbor all the world's refugees under British administration. Notwithstanding his image as the nation's most famous Jew, Baruch was a quintessential assimilationist. His Sephardic maternal forebears had come to America in 1690, his German-Polish father in the 1850s. His mother prized her membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution and Daughters of the Confederacy, his father prized his service as a Confederate Army surgeon thrice captured and thrice exchanged. Both father and son were agnostics, and the former refused to allow a rabbi to pray over his deathbed. Neither one had much feeling for historical Judaism. Bernard observed high holy days in deference to his mother's memory, but he married an Episcopalian and allowed his children to be raised in his wife's church. "Disliking," as Schwarz writes, "the sectarianism of Jews, he considered himself an enlightened universal humanist."

Through most of the years that mattered, Baruch kept the Zionists at arm's length. Unlike Walter Lippmann, whose repression of his Jewishness has been brilliantly dissected by Ronald Steel, Baruch resignedly accepted his own identity. (Schwarz asserts that he "exploited" it.) But in common with most of the German-Jewish establishment, he feared Zionism's implication of dual loyalty, to say nothing, as Coit reports, of war between Israel and millions of Moslems over land the Arabs regarded as their own. He doubted the existence of a Jewish nationality, and he deemed it wrong in principle to found a new nation on a religious base. Told by David Ben-Gurion that he nonetheless *owed* support to the state of Israel, he angrily retorted that he was "more concerned with the stars and stripes than the Star of David."

In 1939, according to Coit, Baruch pledged $5 million to FDR as seed money for his United States of Africa proposal. But a year earlier, in what was surely his darkest hour, he passed over James F. Byrnes's suggestion that the United States admit more refugees by expanding the immigration quota for Germans. Like many other assimilated Jews, Baruch's fear that an influx of unemployed refugees would create an American "Jewish problem" outweighed his compassion for Hitler's victims, numbers of whom he helped privately. Until well into 1946 he continued to oppose the establishment of Israel. Whether because of revulsion over the magnitude of the Holocaust, or because, in Schwarz's acid commentary, "he could not ignore an idea that was making history without him," he then gave

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the nascent state important support. Significantly, his two volumes of memoirs, published in 1957 and 1960, refer briefly to the refugee problem but draw the veil over Zionism.

Meanwhile, at age 75, Baruch reluctantly became the American representative to the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission in the spring of 1946. To the dismay of Dean Acheson, who hoped to move the Russians in stages, he insisted that the American proposal for international control deny the right of veto. With bows to Article 10 of Wilson's League of Nations, Baruch also tried, but failed, to win administration approval of provisions for sanctions and general disarmament. Although Schwarz gives Acheson the better of the case, he concedes that the Soviets clearly intended to pursue their own policies " 'without interference or control from the outside.' " In a somewhat strained interpretation, he then concludes that the Baruch Plan had launched an arms race.

Professor Schwarz's always informative and often penetrating book tracks Bernard M. Baruch through much else that is central to the United States' emergence as a world power and its evolution into a corporate state or society. Baruch dabbled in agricultural policy in the 1920s, served as a midwife to the NRA, and flirted with the ill-conceived Morgenthau Plan. He opposed the postwar loan to Britain because of his Wilsonian resentment of imperial trade practices, and he even worried over the inflationary potential of the Marshall Plan. He also blew warm and cold toward Russia.

Those who seek insight into the causes of inflation, and especially the deeper recesses of the American economic polity, would do well to ponder *The Speculator*'s message. So would those who believe that the current debate is over the fact, rather than the nature, of the corporate state.

WILLIAM H. HARBAUGH

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LIVING WITH THE CORPORATION

Corporate Control, Corporate Power
by Edward S. Herman

(Cambridge University Press; $18.95)

Edward Herman's admirably efficient analysis of the corporation recalls the story of the swordsman—in some versions an executioner—known for the extraordinary sharpness of his blade. After a swift blow intended to decapitate him, a victim breathes his relief: "Ah, you missed!" Only to have an observer reply, "Try moving your head." Herman's book is powerful, but his words are deceptively quiet. He scores without raising his voice. He favors understatement. On first reading, some remarkable propositions look as innocent as a briefcase in a baggage room. Since Herman chose this oblique form of discourse, perhaps I do him a disservice in calling attention to the contrast the book presents between an appearance of orthodox, scholarly gentility and an explosive substantive reality.

Herman, supported by a grant from the Twentieth Century Fund, sets out to reexamine the Berle and Means analysis of the separation of ownership from control of the corporation which they presented roughly 50 years ago in their *Modern Corporation and Private Property*. That inquiry is quickly broadened to encompass "the evolution of the control and objectives of large corporations" and a variety of theses on the "managerial revolution" that have circulated for several decades. Herman wants to discover not only what nonowner management means but also how size and bureaucratization have affected the corporation, however managed; he wants to know about intercorporate linkages; about "social responsibility"; about government-corporate relations; and, again and again, about management's motives—for profit, for growth, or for what? In these inquiries he draws, as any good scholar would, on the large body of research that has accumulated on these questions and wields this evidence into an impressive synthesis. When the inconclusiveness of the research—and social science research is always inconclusive in small or great degree—requires him to add his own interpretive comment, he does so openly and with a disarming and unpretentious reasonableness.

His main themes and conclusions are a carefully constructed mixture of confirmations of current beliefs and amendments to them; new findings; and highly disturbing generalizations about the corporate impact on the economy and polity. Among them: although back at the turn of the century there never was a "golden age" of small-business dominance, over a period of 80 years the corporation has become ever more dominant in economic life. Moreover, the "largest nonfinancial firms today are connected with one another through an extensive though loose network of interlocks, joint ventures, advisory bodies, and other social, political, and trade groups." And the internationalization of the corporation has enhanced its power in a number of ways.

These propositions are hardly novel, but another of Herman's challenges much current thought. He concludes that "the large corporation has preserved its autonomy to a remarkable degree during the twentieth century." External financial control, as through banks, has declined. Although government regulation has increased, its effects on corporate autonomy have been offset by the large firms' improved communications systems, greater product diversification, geographic dispersion, and mobility.

Corporate autonomy is also a consequence of the inefficacy of most government regulation. In support of this view, Herman offers a number of explanations and short case-studies. The burden of regulation is commonly misperceived, he believes, because much of what is called regulation is in fact supportive activity. And much regulation, he adds, is at the request of corporations, who use it for various purposes—such as control of competition in their own interests. This analysis is quietly done; its implications lie dormant until the end of the book.

Other themes and conclusions: " . . . the large corporations, with their growth in size and complexity in the

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twentieth century, have evolved from personalized, ad hoc, loose structures into more systematically organized entities. . . ." They have become rationalized. The effect has been to make them more systematic profit-maximizers than before, probably therefore less disposed to pursue the path of the "responsible" or "soulful" corporation. That conclusion, I would guess, is sharply contrary to widespread contemporary notions of the corporation. Herman's evidence and argument, however, are highly persuasive. It is a conclusion which, if correct, is as full of implication as any in the book. For if it is only a pipe dream that corporations will act responsibly, what is to be done?

And why does it matter anyway? Why is a straightforward profit-seeking corporation unacceptable? With foundations, other private groups, and hundreds of government agencies at society's command, why does the corporation need to accept constraint and responsibility beyond profit-making? The answer is that too much is at stake to warrant indifference to the effect of corporate behavior. Society can hardly be indifferent to the corporate impact on such problems, among others, as workplace and environmental externalities, rate of growth of output, technological innovation, multinational corporate challenges to governmental authority, inflation, the arms race, and third world poverty. On all these fronts, we are in peril if we do not improve social control of the corporation.

AND SO Herman turns to consider the current agenda of reforms, ranging from the possible to the improbable. External pressures on the corporation from public opinion, interest groups, and government? All too weak. New disclosure requirements? By their limited nature, they cannot do the job. Appointment by corporations of more independent outside directors? It follows from his analysis of the manipulation of outside directors by inside director-executives that no hope lies here. Directors selected from various specific constituencies? Probably more a source of troublesome conflict than of any substantial change in corporate policy. Worker representatives on the board? So long as they are minority members, they are almost certain to be co-opted or overriden. The same is true for government-appointed representatives on boards in which they are greatly outnumbered. And so on. These and similar avenues of reform seem unlikely to have much effect.

Nothing short of more consequential change will do the job. But nothing more consequential can escape from the stalemate or immobilism of public policy on those issues on which corporations are united in their opposition. Again, Herman returns to an analysis of the weakness of government in coping with corporations.

Is it a merit or fault of the book that, until the more speculative final pages, Herman keeps his generalizations close to specific fact? He achieves a reassuring strength of analysis by doing so. The tactic also gives the book the advantage of concreteness. Neither arid nor tedious, it is rich in specific reference to events, cases, and narratives to substantiate his generalizations. It therefore manages to be both illuminating and engaging.

The fault, if it is one, is that he has decided in effect to accept rather than

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struggle against a hostile bias in social science. The operating rule in social science is: no matter how unstudied, undocumented, or unproved an interpretive generalization about society may be, if it is widely believed by social scientists to be true, then a social scientist is allowed to repeat it in his own work without any obligation to provide evidence in its support. But if a generalization challenges a broad agreement among social scientists, a social scientist is allowed to repeat it only by assuming the obligation to demonstrate its truth. What Herman has done is left many of the accepted propositions about the corporation and society stand, challenging them only on points on which he can bring specific contrary evidence. He does not attempt an evaluation of much complacent social scientific opinion about the corporation and its regulation in order to reveal the shaky foundations of those beliefs. He has consequently not pressed his case as far as it can go. The result is that his limited argument, stripped of troublesome controversy that would attend the effort to enlarge it—and would for that reason make it less persuasive—leaves much of the existing body of thought unchallenged.

Herman, moreover, could have achieved a further clarification of his analysis with a categorical distinction (or an explicit continuum) on which he verges but which he never quite achieves. It is a distinction between those corporate decisions over which consumers can be argued to achieve, by voting with their dollars, a significant and fairly direct degree of systematic control (decisions on what is to be produced, in what quantities, and at what price) and those corporate decisions over which no such consumer control can be exercised (location of plant, methods of executive recruitment, choice of technology, for example).

Traditionally, economic theory treats all corporate decisions as though they belonged to the first category and thus regards all defects in consumer control as aberrations attributable to monopoly or "market power" by which the firm frustrates normal competitive consumer controls. But in fact defective consumer control over the corporation with respect to the second category of decisions, such as those about technology, is no aberration. It is the norm. And it has little to do with market power or monopoly. The defect will be found even in the most competitive industries.

Herman has not entirely broken out of this traditional view of corporate behavior. He is, I believe, disproportionately concerned with market power and the first category of decisions. Although he attends to the grave problems of inadequate public control over decisions on technology, plant location, use of chemicals in industry, and other decisions about the second category, that concern does not rest comfortably with his emphasis on defects in public control arising out of market power. I cannot say that his conclusions are affected, but his argument would gain in simplicity if he used a categorical distinction between the two kinds of corporate decision.

To return to the substance of this excellent study, just how serious is the problem posed by corporate behavior and government's inability to control it sufficiently? With good luck, we may get by, Herman answers, by drifting into reforms "somewhat along the lines of French, Japanese, and Swedish models of guided capitalism." But another scenario is not implausible. Here it is in Herman's words. Read it carefully.

> The upsurge of democracy in the West over the past several decades has troubled many business leaders in the United States (and elsewhere), who yearn for greater governability and a more favorable climate of business. In many Third World countries these matters have been rectified by martial law governments that have brought 'law and order,' with responses from US business people that have ranged mainly from satisfaction to positive enthusiasm. In a revised 'stages of growth' model, instead of Third World political economies becoming like us, under conditions of slower growth, severe factionalism, and major systematic shock, we may become more like them.

CHARLES E. LINDBLOM

Charles E. Lindblom is the author of *Politics and Markets: The World's Political-Economic Systems* (Basic).

VERSIONS OF ORIENTALISM

Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World by Edward W. Said

(Pantheon; $10.95, $3.95 paper)

"Covering Islam is not an interpretation in the genuine sense but an assertion of power." Edward Said, again. The new book is about orientalism in the media. American newspapers and television are arraigned for "the dissemination of racist caricatures of the Islamic peoples." These caricatures, argues Said, are designed, knowingly or not, to serve the interests of the United States in the Middle East, which are imperialist interests. Said has Iran mainly in mind, but the Palestinians are never far away. His contention is that the hostility of many Americans to these revolutions is owed to the disfigurement of Islam that is delivered to them by "the media and the experts."

It is hard to deny that Islam is not widely understood in this country. This absence of understanding, however, does not explain the attitudes of the American public toward certain developments in the Arab world. American opposition to the new order in Iran, for example, is not religious; it is political. The tyranny of the mullahs is detested not because it is Islamic, but because it is wrong. Said does not see this. He complains that for most Americans "'Islam' is only what holds the West's oil reserves," but most Americans know that it is OPEC, not Islam, that holds them, and it is OPEC they blame. Islam did not stand in the way of Sadat's success in the United States. It did not dissuade the Carter administration from sidling up to Iraq, or the Reagan Administration from sidling up to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. (And it did not lay a glove on Mohammed Ali's standing in the culture.) The Americans do not really care about Islam. They care about money, and about freedom; these are the standards by which strange forms of life are measured.

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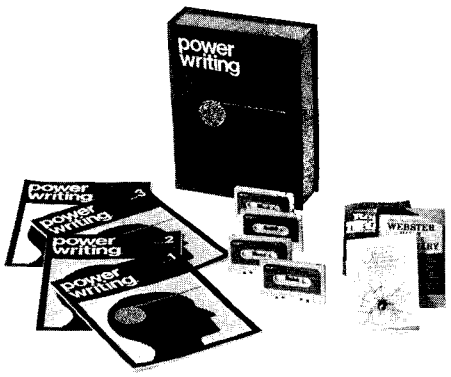

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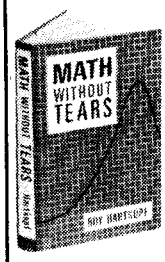
There is no doubt that during the hostage crisis Americans were served up representations of Islam that were vulgar and even racist. There were American images of Iran so crude that they brought to mind Iranian images of America. The hostage crisis was ideologically invigorating for all concerned. The question is not, however, whether the American people were adequately instructed about the full complexity of the Islamic world, but whether they received a picture of a part of that world that was, in the main, false. And it must be said that the American response to the taking of the hostages, and more generally to the rise of Khomeini, was not exactly delusional. They concluded that Iran had exchanged one form of absolutism for another, that the shah was a torturer friendly to America and Khomeini a torturer unfriendly to America. It was a simple conclusion, but it was not wrong. The conception of self-interest that informed it was no less narrow and unenlightened than the conception of self-interest that informed the Iranian insurrection. It was a conclusion, moreover, that the Iranians encouraged. The media that manipulated the masses in the West was itself manipulated by the masses in the East. This may have been the first revolution produced for television.

The savagery of the clerics must not be allowed to hide behind the stupidity of the media. The crimes of Khalkhali and Beheshti were more considerable than the crimes of Cronkite and Chancellor. The latter slandered, but the former murdered. If the new government of Iran did not wish to be known by its hostages it should not have held them. The report that the hostages were taken and that they were abused was not an invention of the American information industry; and neither was the report that homosexuals were being shot, that the Kurds were being put down, that Bani-Sadr's supporters were being bloodily purged. Said says plaintively that the American people did not know enough about the inner workings of the Iranian revolution. (That is not exactly correct; the struggle for power in Iran was frequently adduced as the reason for delay in the negotiations, and for Americans to be patient.) It is hard to believe that had Americans known more about it they would have liked it any better.

MATH WITHOUT TEARS



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SAID'S book is really nothing more than the application to the Arab question of the most tired cliché of political criticism, which is that the real problem is the media. It "shapes the news, decides *what* is news and *how* it is news." It "prods" events. This obsession with the influence of newspapers, this shrill insistence that the people are in the dark, that they are being fed only lies, was once the signature of the paranoid right; but it has in recent years come to the radical left too, and made it also paranoid. The political writings of Noam Chomsky are a monument to left-wing paranoia, devoted as they are to demonstrating that the press in this country is "a system of state-supported propaganda"; nothing that Chomsky wrote about the slaughter in Cambodia was quite as angry as his attack on Jean Lacouture for misquoting the number of its victims. Said believes that, as he wrote in *Orientalism*,

> it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse . . . that what is commonly circulated by it is not 'truth' but representations. . . . The apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such.

The idea that was inflicted upon Ernest Renan—that knowledge is an interpretation according to interests—is now inflicted upon Barbara Walters. Said protests, in this book and elsewhere, that knowledge is nevertheless possible, that there is truth, but he never shows how; this is an idea so fine no mind can violate it.

Said is too disconsolate. The media are full of forbidden things. The shah's depredations are hardly a secret; and most Americans do not read *Mother Jones*. It is hardly an act of intellectual courage to plead for the Palestinians; *Time* does it all the time, and not it only. (More on *Time* in a moment.) Perhaps Said will not be satisfied until the media withdraw their support for a Jewish state, but that is his problem, not theirs. Israel deserves the support it has won. And the support it does not deserve—for a policy that presumes to rule the West Bank forever—it has not won. Begin and his annexationist associates are not exactly the media's darlings. All is not well, to be sure, about the coverage of the Middle East. There *is* a scandal, and it is the moral and political prestige of the PLO.

It is certainly the case that the media interfere with the news to an unconscionable degree. Said, however, flatters them. It is still possible to see the story within the story. There are things that happen even if reporters are not there to cover them—fewer things, perhaps, than appear in the papers, but real things; and not even reporters can keep them from coming out. There are events, and they can be known. We are not all trapped in the *New York Times*. The political world is a little as it seems. That is in part because the many instruments of the information industry are not, at least in this country, regulated by a single political outlook, and in part because this society encourages in its citizens the exercise of a critical sense. To read the newspapers critically, however, is not to read them radically. Said observes that "the choice facing the individual scholar or intellectual" is "whether to put intellect at the service of power or at the service of criticism, community, and moral sense." That is well put. It is precisely for the sake of criticism, community, and moral sense that men like Khomeini and Arafat are scorned.

Said's book is not helped by its dishonesty. An example:

> When *Time* magazine devoted its major story to Islam on April 16, 1979, the cover was adorned with a Gerome painting of a bearded muzzein standing in a minaret, calmly summoning the faithful to prayer; it was as florid and overstated a 19th-century period piece of Orientalist art as one could imagine. Anachronistically, however, this quiet scene was emblazoned with a caption that had nothing to do with it: 'The Militant Revival.' There could be no better way of symbolizing the difference between Europe and America on the subject of Islam. A placid and decorative painting done almost routinely in Europe as an aspect of one's general culture has been transformed by three words into a general American obsession.

But surely I am exaggerating? Wasn't

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Time's cover story on Islam simply a piece of vulgarization, catering to a supposed taste for the sensational? Does it *really* reveal anything more serious than that?

Said concludes that it does. He is correct. On page 54 of the magazine, right in the middle of the glossy imperialist propaganda, there appeared a full page entitled "Islam, Orientalism, and the West," by Edward Said, in which he "summarized," for millions of Americans, his "angry, provocative new book." Covering, indeed.

Said's constant call for a better understanding of the Arabs continues to be vitiated by his own understanding of the Jews. He understands nothing. He harps upon "Israel's avowedly religious character"; "the pronouncements of various rabbinic authorities," he writes, are not consulted enough by those who would properly grasp "positions and policies inside Israel, especially when these are directed at non-Jews." It may interest Said to know that the rabbinical establishment in Israel and elsewhere is fiercely divided on the matter of the territories. Yet he upbraids the press for having failed to apprise the West of the difference between Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Shariat-madari. There is also this observation, which is rather chilling: "Lebanon and Israel are exceptions: both belong *in* the Islamic world, but in one a Christian minority rules, in the other a Jewish." A Jewish minority rules Israel? Said must be one of those Palestinians with plans. He still does not comprehend that the Jewish state is, by definition, a place where there will never be a Jewish minority. The minority status of the Jews is just what Zionism set out to abolish; and it will be the logical conclusion of classical Zionism, and one of its finest hours, when Israel, for that very reason, surrenders the West Bank in some form to the Palestinian nation. (I see that Said is scheduled to speak this fall on "Questions of Jewish Identity"; in light of Said's previous comments about the Jews, it may be confidently expected of that occasion, that orientalism will be given a taste of its own medicine.)

You can learn a great deal from newspapers, said Baudelaire, if you read them with the proper contempt. The same may be said of this book.

LEON WIESELTIER

A FAMILY FABLE

The Hotel New Hampshire by John Irving

(Dutton; $15.95)

It's extraordinary what a little feeling can do for a novel. To prepare for *The Hotel New Hampshire*, I read *The World According to Garp*, and disliked it intensely, not for its slapstick sex or for its "comic and ugly and bizarre" preoccupation with mutilation and death, but for its shallowness, its quality of energy without feeling. The novel conveyed only one emotion—self-love. Garp, Irving's writer-hero, was so taken with himself that the title of the last chapter jarred: how could there possibly be "Life After Garp"? Who would want to go on living without that paragon? I frankly hated *Garp*, and picked up the new novel expecting to hate it too. Instead I liked it. Feeling made the difference. In *Garp*, it all flows back on Irving's alter ego; in *The Hotel New Hampshire*, it flows out, bringing a whole family to life on a wide current of care.

John Irving is a talented but facile writer. His prose never encounters those resistances—emotional, moral, epistemological—that energize memorable statement. It never strains at meaning; it just sweeps you along, its easy momentum lulling your critical faculty and rocking you back to a childlike state of wonder. In this 400-page book, for example, I can find only one moment of verbal felicity: "Harold Swallow, darting through the trees, guiding us like a hush up the path. . . ." One pauses over that "like a hush up a path," to admire it. But that is just what Irving doesn't want, for if we stop we might start asking questions that would undermine our pleasure in a novel so willfully unrealistic. So Irving keeps us moving, sacrificing rhetoric to pace, as in the most primitive narrative forms, the fable and the fairy tale. In fiction like this, meaning lies near the surface of the story and in the voice of the storyteller.

The Hotel New Hampshire is a family saga; the storyteller is John Berry, the middle child, a brother and sister fore and aft. Not a novelist like Garp, he is the family annalist, the compiler of its collective story. It begins at a hotel on the Maine coast in 1939, and ends there many years and many adventures later. Along the way, two members of the family die in a plane crash; John's older sister is raped by the backfield of a prep school football team; his older brother grows into a homosexual; his little sister stops growing (" 'You're no dwarf, dear,' Mother whispered to Lilly, but Lilly just shrugged. 'So what if I am?' she said, bravely. 'I'm a good kid.' "); and, in a moment of extreme if improbable peril for the whole Berry tribe, his father makes a heroic gesture that costs him his eyes. The two props of the plot are the father's attempts to make his dream of running a successful hotel come true, first in New Hampshire, then in Vienna. The Vienna hotel is occupied by whores, with whom young John investigates the holy mysteries, and by a cell of terrorists who plan to blow up the Vienna State Opera and then take the Berrys hostage. A subplot has John falling in love with his sister, Franny; and oh, there is so much more; for sheer quantity of astonishing happenings and eccentric characters, *Hotel* beats *Raiders of the Lost Ark* cold.

THE novel has the manic rhythm of a cartoon; crisis follows crisis in a spiral of woe; and, at each crisis, the Berry family comes together in a moving tableau of solidarity. Family is one of the novel's values; imagination is the other. That faculty is seen in a double light. On the one hand, it is a defense, a way of coping with troubles. The lack of it can be disabling, and one character commits suicide when her imagination fails. On the other hand, the attempt to realize everything you imagine can be dangerous. Father Berry's lavish efforts to live out his dreams result in several deaths; and the price he ultimately pays himself, being blinded, is a fitting emblem of his benighted condition all along. Moreover, throughout the novel imaginative pranks backfire, leading to

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tragic unintended consequences. Irving's double view of the imagination, I suspect, is even behind his preoccupation with the Nazis. They, after all, tried to do *everything* they imagined, with what terrible results we know.

John Berry's voice, however, returns us to a warmer idea of the imagination: its power of sympathy. "You've got to get obsessed and stay obsessed," John's grandfather, a football coach, urges him. Coach Bob's advice is about weightlifting, and John follows it fanatically. But his deeper obsession is with his family. How can I make father happy? How will grim Frank turn out? How I miss Mother and Egg! How I long for Franny! This anxious love is the pulse of his mind.

Someone calls John "a weight lifting maiden aunt"; in another vocabulary, he would be a *mensch*. His moments of caring, together with the larger set-pieces of family solidarity, make the human element in a novel otherwise unbearably farcical. John Berry and John Irving remind us that the imagination is not simply a Rube Golberg faculty of invention; it is also a moral force, a way of sharing others' lives, others' burdens. We all want to check in to the Hotel New Hampshire. It is "the sympathy space" where we can be fully known and yet fully loved, and where a powerful imagination holds us fast and won't let us die.

JACK BEATTY

AN EDWARDIAN LIFE

Saki: A Life of Hector Hugh Munro
by A. J. Langguth

(Simon and Schuster; $13.95)

"Life being what it is," said Gauguin, "one dreams of revenge." And for some writers, writing is that dream. Certainly this was true of Hector Munro, who called himself Saki, and wrote out his revenges in some of the wittiest and most unpleasant stories of his time under that pseudonym. What he had to revenge was his childhood. Like Kipling he had been sent back from the Orient, where his father was a police officer, to be raised in England, at home but in exile. Like Forster, he was raised by women—in Munro's case by two fiercely repressive aunts—and so came to see the power of society as female. He grew up to be as reactionary as Kipling and as homosexual as Forster; and though he never wrote as well as either, he had his revenge.

The early years of his maturity contain nothing to suggest that his talents were literary. He began, like his father, as a man of action, going out to Burma as his father had done, to be a policeman. But he hadn't his father's toughness, and in not much more than a year he was invalided out, and returned to England to convalesce. The convalescence seems to have taken six years, during which young Munro hunted, played tennis, and wrote one book. *The Rise of the Russian Empire*, published in 1900, got lukewarm reviews in England and colder ones in the United States, and showed pretty conclusively that whatever Munro might make of his life, he'd never be a historian.

The year 1900 was an important date in Munro's life: he was 30 then, and to have reached 30, as his character Reginald observed, is to have failed in life. Perhaps it was only when he had become 30, and had failed to remain permanently a youth, that Munro could find his voice, his form, and his true subject. That year he did two things of greater importance to his career than the publication of his history of Russia: he began the series of illustrated political satires that became *The Westminster Alice*, and he chose a pen name out of Omar Khayyám, and called himself Saki. A year later Reginald, the first of his alter-ego characters, appeared in a sketch (you could hardly call it a short story) that was also signed Saki. The real career, one might have said, had been launched; the revenge on loneliness, on fathers who left you alone and aunts who didn't, had begun.

But almost at once that career was interrupted by another, quite different one: Munro went to the Balkans as foreign correspondent for the *Morning Post*, and stayed in Europe for seven years, first in Bulgaria, then in Warsaw and St. Petersburg, and finally in Paris. These were important years for Munro, and the life that he lived, somewhat glamorized, was an important man-of-action gesture. In his stories foreign correspondents and other world wanderers are always romantically heroic, and the prose that celebrates them grows purple and breathy: Keriway in *The Unbearable Bassington* is "a man that wolves have sniffed at," and for his inventor that was a supremely desirable condition (in the stories, wolves figure frequently as symbols of wild, asocial freedom).

Back in London in 1909, Munro settled down to be a man of letters. He had five years of that life, and in those years he managed to publish five books, and to make Saki famous. Then came the war. Munro had yearned for it—"I have always looked forward," he said, "to the romance of a European war"—and although he was 44, he enlisted at once as a common soldier. He was killed on the western front in November 1916.

Clearly, and sadly, it was a divided life: on the one hand the man-of-action, exemplified by the father, and attempted by Munro as policeman, foreign correspondent, and soldier; on the other hand what Saki called the man-of-activities, the waspish, languid youth who is the central figure in most of the stories—Clovis, Reginald, Comus Bassington—and is also heard in the witty, bitchy voice of Saki himself. Was Munro to emulate his father, or to repudiate him? It was (or seems to a lay observer to have been) a classic situation for producing a troubled homosexual. And no one who reads the stories can doubt that it did. Saki's boys are erotically imagined, his women are powerful and threatening, society is an enemy to be deceived but not defied, and lying is an approved mode of self-defense (only the most insensitive and misguided characters in Saki tell the truth).

Mr. Langguth assumes from this that Munro was a sexually active homosexual: he refers to his "sexual foraging," and compares him to Oscar Wilde. But he offers no evidence for this assumption, and I am inclined to doubt it. The Wilde trial had demonstrated society's power to punish deviance, and

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Saki's stories never underestimate that power. Munro himself seems to have been, in externals at least, the model of a repressed deviant, not of the defiant kind: he was always young-looking for his age, always correctly and impeccably dressed (striped pants and a bowler), always rather distant in company, never obtrusive, witty only in his writings.

If he indulged his sexual fancies in his fiction, he did so in odd, ambivalent ways: for example, Gabriel-Ernest, in the story of that title, is a beautiful, naked boy (like the similar lads in some of Forster's stories), but he is also a werewolf who devours children. The stupid aunt in the tale pities his nakedness, and tries to domesticate him, but her nephew is disturbed and frightened by him. As a parable of homosexuality entering a world of aunts the story is explicit enough: Munro may have yearned to be the sort of man that wolves have sniffed at, but he was also afraid of wildness and freedom—better to be sniffed at by aunts, perhaps. At the end of "Gabriel-Ernest" the werewolf has departed (having eaten one more small boy), and the aunt still rules the house: society has proved itself stronger than sex.

We may regret that this was so for Munro—God knows his life sounds an unhappy one—but we can't regret it for Saki. Ambivalence and anxiety, public submissions and private revenges (especially the revenges of children upon aunts, and the weak young upon the powerful old generally), make the stories work. Without those qualities they would be no better than Forster's, maybe even as bad as *Maurice*.

SAKI has customarily been praised as an aphoristic prose stylist, and as a constructor of clever, O. Henry-ish plots; but I think that what keeps his reputation alive is neither of these dubious virtues. We all know a few of his well-turned phrases ("The cook was a good cook, as cooks go; and as cooks go she went"), but most of his witticisms are simply mechanical twists of the obvious, tricks that anyone could perform with a little practice. And the style—so arch, so artifical—seems a dated and limiting medium. Nor are the stories all that brilliant in their construction; they were written for newspapers and they reach their ends hastily and often clumsily, reminding us, if we need reminding, that it is possible to be ironic without being subtle.

No, what's good in Saki is not his prose or his construction, but his vision of the world, in all its empty, vicious, resentful creepiness. It is not a world of evil—evil would be too momentous for Saki's characters—but of ill-tempered vindictiveness, a world in which the greatest human pleasure is gratified cruelty. Saki called one of his collections *Beasts and Superbeasts*, making in that title the only distinction he could perceive between human beings and the rest of the animal world: man is a superbeast because he is capable of supreme beastliness, but he is like the others in his instincts. A woman is even worse. (A wise child called Matilda, in the story of "The Boar Pig," makes this point in the form of a language lesson. A frightened woman has referred to the boar pig as "*un bête féroce*": "*Une bête*," corrected Matilda; "a pig is masculine as long as you call it a pig, but if you lose your temper with it and call it a ferocious beast it becomes one of us at once.")

IN THIS world of ferocious beasts, society and its rules offer a frail protection for the weak, but the price of that protection is the suppression of freedom (on this point Saki and Freud were in agreement). Against suppression the weak man's only weapons are deviousness and lies. If he is found out, or if he is simply and publicly himself, the sentence of society is banishment. (Comus Bassington, being unbearably Comus-like, is driven out of England, and dies in Africa, bitterly watching black children playing like animals.)

There is something very Edwardian about all this, and Saki is a very period writer. In his England the Victorian pieties and certainties have been lost, and only manners are left—and beneath the veneer of manners, the reality of cruelty. Being a homosexual in post-Wilde England, Munro must have felt the precariousness of social position most acutely, and like other homosexual writers (Wilde and Forster, for instance) he made his anxiety his subject. In his stories the weak are continually threatened with humiliation by the strong, but for a moment, through lies or deception or the power of Pan (the presiding deity of Edwardian homosexuals), the weak conquer: children strike back at parents and aunts, limp young men-of-activities outwit men-of-action, old women practice witchcraft against busybodies, animals turn on human beings. It's all fantasy, of course: the strong survive, society never bends. Still, it was a revenge, of a kind.

A.J. Langguth's biography of Saki is the first to be written, if one discounts Ethel Munro's pious memoir of her brother, and is worth having. Langguth has marshaled such facts as there are (Munro's nervous reticence, and his sister's determination to make him a hero, have suppressed many particulars), and he has put them together in a reasonable and lucid narrative. But he is not, to my mind, sufficiently interpretive of his facts, and on the qualities of the stories he often seems to me simply wrong. I don't think it is true, for instance, that Saki's cruelty troubles us less than it did his contemporaries, or that, being cruel, he "turns out to be one of us" (who is *us*, anyway?). Or that his cruelty was a great gift: it is a reality of his work, certainly, but it is a limitation. Most of all I reject Langguth's final judgment of Saki: "he makes us laugh." That's just what he doesn't do: shrink, perhaps, or shiver, or turn away in repulsion from his human carnivores, but never laugh. Only the animals laugh in Saki.

SAMUEL HYNES

Samuel Hynes is the author of *The Auden Generation* (Viking). He teaches English at Princeton.

BRIEF REVIEW

The Comet is Coming! The Feverish Legacy of Mr. Halley by Nigel Calder

(Viking; $12.95)

Halley's comet, the most famous of all recurrent celestial phenomena, is scheduled to make its next visit to our skies in 1986, and it's got British science journalist Nigel Calder worried. After all, for thousands of years comets have been regarded as harbingers of disaster; last time Halley came by, in 1910, people actually committed suicide to avoid the doom they believed it foretold. Will "comet fever" strike again? Not likely, but just to be on the safe side, Calder has strewn this popular guide to the

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astronomy, history, and folklore of comets with repeated reminders that comets are just trivial bits of cosmic debris, and that the trouble associated with them is invariably man-caused.

Those who never thought otherwise may find this not very earthshaking news, but fortunately Calder also conveys a wealth of fascinating comet lore. I didn't know, for instance, that the excellent comet records of the ancient Chinese astrologers are now used to date events in early Chinese history, or that Nero thwarted a comet-inspired prediction of his assassination by killing off all the likely perpetrators—thus, the comet did mean bad news, but not for him. Moving from astrology to science, we learn that during the 16th and 17th centuries comets played an important role in the founding of modern astronomy, for they were the clearest violators of the Aristotelian, Church-approved view of the universe, according to which no change could occur in the upper heavens. (Halley himself was a major scientist in fields as disparate as oceanography and astronomy, and it is ironic that he is best remembered for the comparatively minor feat of predicting the return in 1758 of a comet last seen in 1682—Halley's comet.)

Today, day-to-day comet-watching is largely an amateur affair, but comets retain a place in a variety of scientific hypotheses. Some of these are rather wild—Fred Hoyle's theory that many human illnesses are caused by germs that reach earth from outer space preserved in the nuclei of comets—but others are tantalizing. There is evidence, for instance, that the disappearance of the dinosaurs, long thought to have been a slow process, the result of an inability to adapt to cooling climates, was actually quite sudden, the result of a years-long blackout caused by a comet that crash-landed.

All in all, this is a handy little book, stuffed with odd tidbits of information and with just enough science to challenge the casual reader. It could have been even better, had Calder curbed his excessively arch prose style—did he have to call Archimedes "the Eureka streaker"?—and had he been able to set aside a disdain for comets that borders on active dislike. After all, it's not their fault that human beings are superstitious and prone to paranoia. The many glorious color illustrations suggest another reason for our age-old obsession with these pieces of "orbiting trash": perhaps we are fascinated by comets because they are strange and beautiful.

KATHA POLLITT

Katha Pollitt is a New York writer and critic.

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CULTURE NOTE

Frederick Wiseman's latest film, *Model* (PBS, September 16), will be welcomed by all those who have learned how to see with Wiseman's eyes the absurdities of institutions and corporate structures in his films *Titicut Follies* and *High School* on through *Basic Training*, *Hospital*, *Juvenile Court*, and *Primate*. Wiseman's treatment of the bizarre world of fashion is gleeful and scathing.

Early on, Wiseman shows an array of gorgeous women and men trooping through the Zoli agency, and we are struck by the whimsical unfairness of the business. The interviewer asks a stunning girl her height, learns she's 5'6½", and tells her that she won't do. She needs to be 5'7". When another girl, also stunning, *is* 5'7", the same man tells her that "5'7" tends to be difficult to work with in the sophisticated look." He makes impossibly fine distinctions; her features aren't "young all-American," he says, but perhaps she has "the Avon look." But the interviewer isn't tyrannizing to please himself. The few candidates he finds acceptable, he passes on to Zoli—Zoltan Rendessy, the owner of the agency—who is under as much pressure as his employee.

So, Wiseman shows us, are the models who file through Zoli's door to submit to the tyrannical, ludicrous scrutiny. Between the fashion sequences, we see Manhattan crowds, self-absorbed roller skaters, window displays, an ambulance—the recognizable streets that are dangerous, ugly, and an incentive for escape that we've recognized for years. How can we criticize these people, the models, for making choices not so different from those we have made ourselves?

The film raises the question: whom to blame for this madness? Where does the buck stop? Wiseman prompts us to infer some dreadful pasha at the source, especially in the concluding sequence, which is one of the nerviest things we are likely to see on television this year. The film ends with a runway fashion show of an Oscar de la Renta collection. There are engaging preliminaries as the models, while they're making up, dance to a tape deck, horse around, and stay loose. One of the male assistants (this world is full of go-fers) puts on a dress and earrings and parodies the dancing and posing of the girls, who are amused to see a man striking their poses and demeaning himself as they are obliged to do. We're back to the seraglio with the eunuchs and the concubines and the banter of shared oppression. This is the buildup. The fashion show then begins, and we watch the girls. And watch them. And watch them until we get bored—which is what television is most terrified of making us become. We notice faces in the audience, of ugly old women and fat-cat men in natty suits. They're bored too. Boredom—theirs and ours—has turned the beautiful women into mere meat. It is the pasha's boredom, his glazed surfeit we have glimpsed at last. The buck, at last, has stopped—at the buck. Whether the pasha is dollars, consumerism, capitalism, fashion, civilization, or the coming of the last days is finally less important than the glimpse Wiseman has recorded of its barbarity.

DAVID R. SLAVITT

David R. Slavitt's *Dozens: A Poem* was published last spring by Louisiana State University Press.

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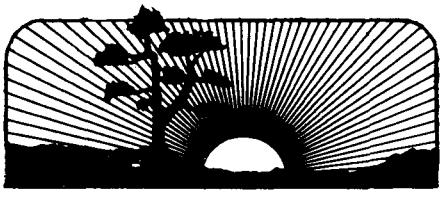

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NEW YORK DIARIST

Primary Colors

"WE ARE NOT hillbillies: we are people who went to Radcliffe and Stanford, respectively." Thus begins a (literal) call to arms in the September issue of *Esquire*. The author, Chip Elliott, got tired of being pushed around by neighborhood toughs and bought himself a .38 snub-nose, which he now carries with him at all times. That's his right; the law allows it. But there's something distasteful about the painstaking way Elliott dissociates himself from the fellows you read about in *Argosy* and *Soldier of Fortune*. Sure, Elliott packs heat; but he also writes novels. He has a psychiatrist wife and a French Lop rabbit named Nicole. He has at least one friend who is a mime. He liked Peter Brook's International Center for Theater Research production of *The Ik*. He moved to Los Angeles (not "the glamorous, movie-struck Los Angeles of the Ginger Man and the Beverly Hills Hotel," but "the Los Angeles of the Nuart theater, the Fox Venice, the Jung Institute") to be near the sea ("not the beach, the sea"). None of these details would be relevant if Elliott's message were as simple as, "You've got a right to arm yourself, so do it." Elliott is out to apply a little peer pressure on those *Esquire* readers who share his refined taste in everything but guns. Don't you envy the nose, he implicitly asks, that would as readily sniff cold blue steel as plunge into *Gödel, Escher, Bach*? Elliott proudly describes a tussle with some street kids who flashed a kitchen knife and said, "Just the wallet, man. Won't be no trouble." Elliott pulled out an automatic. The knife drew nearer. "I thought, this guy is willing to kill me for thirty-five dollars," Elliott writes. *I* thought—and I think the average mercenary would agree with me—*that* guy is willing to be killed for thirty-five dollars! Hardly the sort of hard-nosed practicality we expect from Man At His Best. A corpse can't tell the Beverly Hills Hotel from the Jung Institute, or the beach from the sea.

CRIME IS "the only issue" in New York's mayoral election, according to the September 6 *Daily News*. The *News* ought to know; since the failure of *Tonight*, its stab at upscale respectability, the *News* has been paying close attention to this side of city life ("Police said the hunt began when a hysterical young man staggered out of the cemetery around 2 a.m. and told two policemen who attempted to question him: 'I killed her. I killed her'"). But despite the reduction of the New York City police force by a third and a 5.6 percent increase in crime during the first six months of this year, none of the citizens quoted in the *News* were inclined to be too hard on the incumbent, Ed Koch. A group of retirees say "they are willing to give the mayor their vote—provided they get more action on crime. That's how vital the crime question is to them. And their attitude is typical of the South Bronx." But the South Bronx isn't really driving a very hard bargain. Why aren't they playing Koch against the leading Republican contender? Because the leading Republican contender is also Ed Koch.

IT WAS QUITE possible to spend Labor Day weekend in Manhattan, as I did, without hearing a word about the September 10 primaries. (I saw a street comedian do an imitation of Crazy Eddie, a local TV hawker of audio equipment, but waited in vain for any references to Melvin Klenetsky, a Democratic challenger whose slogan is "Stop Crazy Eddie—his policies are insane.") Koch is the only candidate who can afford TV spots. I didn't hear any radio ads, although Klenetsky and Frank Barbaro, another Democratic opponent, were said to have a few. Robbed of the usual theatrics, candidates made do with the issues. On the Sunday before the primary, the *New York Times* invited Barbaro and John Esposito, Koch's hapless Republican opponent, to write about education. Not a very shrewd choice of topics, because the latest news, reported in that day's "Week in Review" section, seemed to be good: a majority of New York City's elementary and junior high school students scored above the national average on reading tests. This is a reversal of a downward slide in the 1970s, which, according to *Times* reporter Gene Maeroff, "was increasingly accepted as irreversible." Barbaro made the mistake of addressing these figures with grumpy skepticism. "We cannot define a child's ability on the basis of one test. We need more analysis of performance. We cannot let the system wend its way, failing a significant number of children, and then put up 'gates' for them to scale." This must be the first time that apologies have been made for an *improvement* in test scores. But Barbaro isn't the only killjoy. Maeroff reports that some experts attribute the rise in test scores to good coaching. "Too much is done to achieve good results on the testing, so much so in fact that at times these efforts generate overreactions of another sort, having to do with the security of the testing," whines the Huron Institute. Now I can understand applying this sort of thinking to smug suburban high school kids who pay exorbitant fees to SAT tutors, perform well, and then attribute their dizzyingly high scores to superior intellect. Their time would indeed be better spent poring over *Morte d'Arthur*. But it's downright meanspirited to deny the heretofore illiterate schoolchildren of New York City a smug moment or two.

BARBARO SEEMS on firmer ground when he attacks Koch as a "born-again Republican." Koch's pursuit of the Republican nomination deserves to be hooted at. I don't, alas, feel qualified to judge whether the mayor's acts of hospitality toward big business—for instance, his $20-million tax abatement to AT&T—show his truer colors. But I have seen *Arthur*, a recent specimen of New York's newly productive movie business, and it makes me nervous. Although filmed during the summer before the election of Ronald Reagan, *Arthur* strikes me as being wholly in sympathy with Reagan Republicanism. Arthur is rich and unproductive, and very lovable. At the end of the film he must choose between his riches and the working world; he chooses riches. *Arthur* has been compared to *My Man Godfrey*, a 1930s screwball comedy that's actually much funnier and slightly more idealistic. William Powell, a butler who marries a rich and idle Carole Lombard, uses *his* money to start a nightclub on the East River that employs his old hobo cronies. But Arthur, who likes to get drunk and ride through a Manhattan whose skyline sparkles like Wurlitzer pipes, doesn't really give a damn about the poor slobs.

T.N.

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